THE WIRED ISSUE

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JUNE 2003

ISSUE 05

PS2 XBOX GAMECUBE PC GBA PS1 DVD

GMR

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OVER 250 RATINGS INSIDE!

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IL-2 STURMOVIK
MASTERS OF ORION 3
MEGAMAN NETWORK
SONIC ADVENTURE DX
MOTO GP 2
CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW
...AND MORE...P65



AAARGH!!

ONLINE GAMING NOW!

PAGE 38

GET GOING WITH GMR'S ULTIMATE GUIDE INCLUDING...

➔ STAR WARS GALAXIES (PC)
➔ TRUE FANTASY (XBOX)
➔ FINAL FANTASY XI (PS2)...

AND...

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PAGE 46

BLIZZARD REVEALS THE SCANTILY CLAD NIGHT ELVES! PLUS: ALL-NEW INFO AND EXCLUSIVE SCREENS OF THIS AWESOME MMORPG

PLUS:

"MY LIZARD WARRIOR WAS KILLED BY CITY MICE"

MADMAN SEANBABY EXPLORES THE UNDERBELLY OF ONLINE GAMING P39

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INSIDE: PREVIEWS OF JAK & DAXTER 2, K.O.T.O.R. AND NINJA TURTLES!

➔ EXCLUSIVE! HANDS ON WITH CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON! P34

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TUESDAY 10

Just touched down in L.A.

Picked up headers and an intake.

Gotta find a dyno.

WEDNESDAY 11

I love rich kids. They race for pinks and can't even shift.

Fools giving away their girlfriends and their cash by making me race.

It's like delivery.

THURSDAY 12

Back seats? Gone. Rims? Tucked. Body kit next week. Turbocharger on my mind...

To Boost or not to Boost?

THAT is the Question...

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

PlayStation 2

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

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FRIDAY 13

3 strikes. 2 cops. 6 gears.

One more ticket and I trade in my license for a bus pass.

Need nitrous.

SATURDAY 14

Hooked up nitrous. 100 shot.

Had to squeeze on a V8... again. Just sad.

Now where did I put Sasha's number?

SUNDAY 15

Last night, took Sasha on the inside curve.

Tonight, she's taking me...

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TIME MAGAZINE

EPIC

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
Strong Language
Blood and Gore
Strong Sexual Context

PlayStation.2

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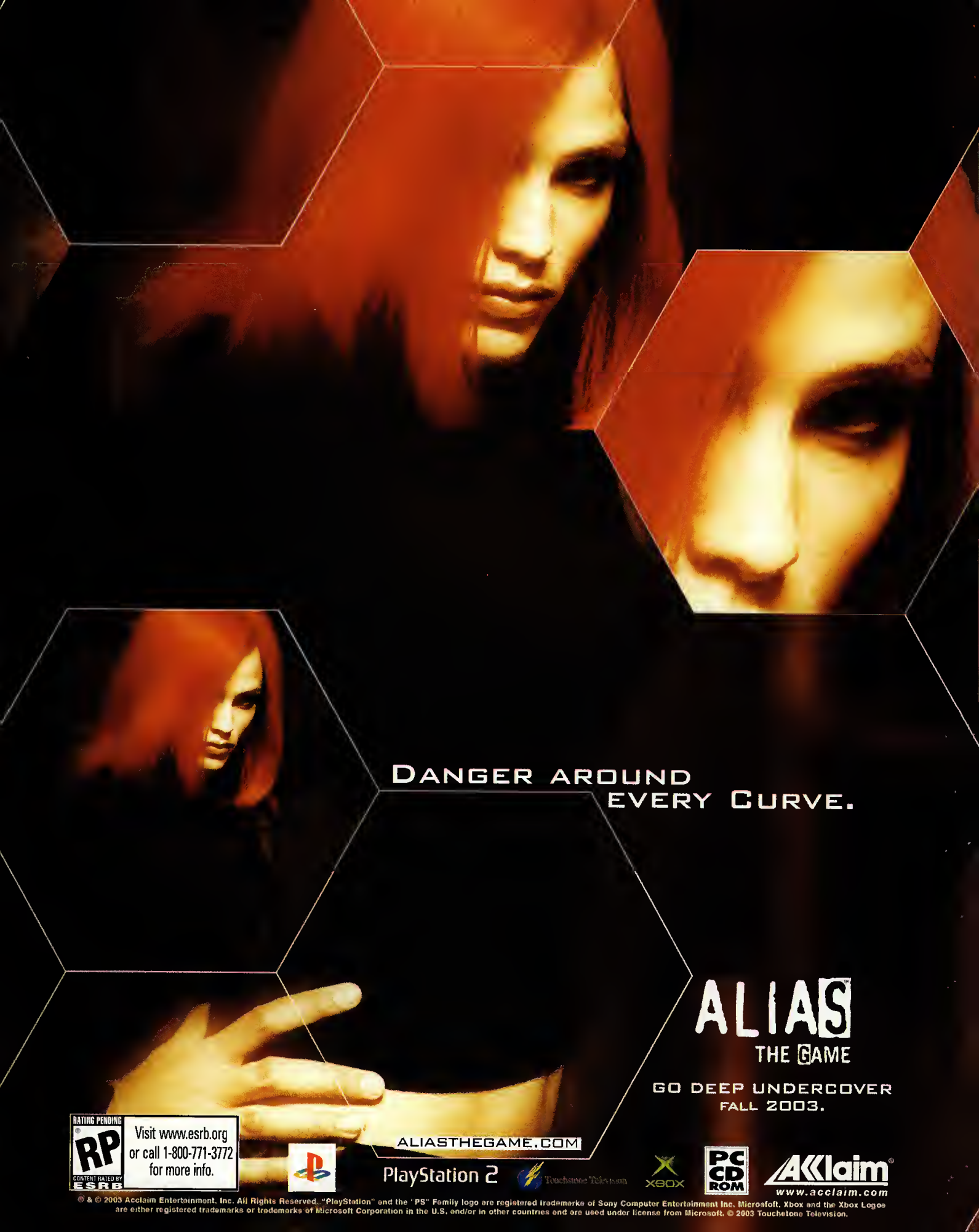
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2003 JUNE ISSUE 05

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GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES

GMR

WELCOME TO THE WIRED ISSUE—PACKED WITH ONLINE STUFF. IT'S A REVOLUTION!





If you build it, they might sort of think about maybe coming.
Not everyone was thrilled by the idea of an online issue. Andrew stared blankly out the window while James looked just plain skeptical. David blew off the meeting entirely, and Caroline, though normally polite enough to remain upright, slumped by inches toward the table until her head came to rest on the tip of her pen.

It's hard to get excited about a subject that's been so diminished by so many false starts, so much hype and marketing doublespeak. Online will be, apparently, a "revolution!"

No, it won't. At best, it'll be an evolution, but more than anything, it will just be a bunch of games. Some will be crap. Some will be OK. And some will be engrossing, deep, and utterly fantastic.

So, despite the studied ennui of the team, we pressed ahead. We set professional nutcase Seanbaby up with broadband, a PC, and all three consoles, and asked him to keep a short diary of his online adventures. You may not agree with his assessment of the current horrors of being a newbie, but you will crack a smile. Possibly two. We also set Andrew to the task of telling you exactly how to get online in less time than it takes him to eat a small plane (about 5 minutes, in case you're interested). And we sent our spies out across the land to hunt down the games that really could be the next huge things, including the stunning *World of WarCraft* and LucasArts' epic *Star Wars Galaxies*.

Go on, then. Get going.

Simon Cox_Editor-in-Chief
PROCRASTINATORTRON



SOULCRSHR_888XHOR
JAMES MIELKE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Level: 99
Experience points: 6 Billion
Profile: Legend has it he was raised by the Monks of the Curious Underwearage high on a mountain top near Wudan. His soul was forged in the fires of Mount Crisco, and he gained his vast experience-points stash by hiding behind a tree and flame-throwing squirrels for thirteen years straight.
Magic Item: T-shirt of Unreasonable Shrinkage



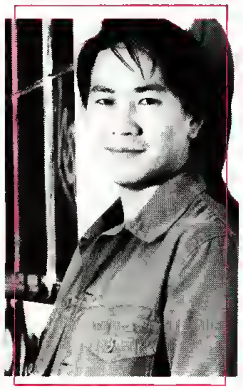
THEMIGHTYFIST
ANDREW PFISTER
WRITER
Level: Unknown
Experience Points: Unknown
Profile: None on file
SYS-OP NOTE. He is a disturbance in the code—a glitch so huge it ripples through all the worlds, gathering magical items like a giant magical-items-gathering, er, thing. And then it leaves, with carnage in its wake. Oh—and he owes $14.95 in "online" charges...



BAG_O_HOLDING_33
TOM PRICE
NEWS EDITOR
Level: 50
Experience Points: 26
Profile: After wandering the Barren Wastes for decades, he cast a spell on himself and accidentally turned himself into a Rucksack of Infinity. He now has the ability to turn himself inside out at will, and to slump in the corner of his wardrobe while still slightly damp.
Magic Item: Velcro pockets +2



STUMPY_GRUMPY_LUMPY99
GERRY SERRANO
ART DIRECTOR
Water Level: 100 fathoms
Experience Points: 150,000
Profile: Hatched on Turtle Island, he returns to his birthing grounds once every millennia to play ping-pong and drink whisky made from the juice of the mystical flying turkey of death ("Matt" to his friends). Once angered, he explodes and scatters himself over his enemies.
Magic Item: Net of Shrimping



SORORITY_MOON_CHICK_55
DAVID CHEN
MANAGING EDITOR
Level: 1
Experience Points: 3
Profile: Having lived in Elysium all his life, where his every need and want was attended to by naked nymphs covered in baby oil, he now finds himself suddenly manifest on Earth, where he must deal with naked Gerry's covered in Cod Liver Oil. And he's not happy about it.
Magic Item: Silver Spoon +10



STAR_69
CAROLINE KING
DESIGNER
Level: None of your business
Experience Points: 100
Profile: Once betrothed to Vlad the Inhaler, she now drifts like a ghost through the Misty Marshes with the Misty Marshas, swapping recipes and occasionally almost giving the finger to passing travellers, but not quite. She is immune to all male attacks.
Magic Item: Brownie of Inconceivable Moistness +4

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GMR

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POST

LETTERS. WE GET LETTERS. WE GET STACKS AND STACKS OF CRANKY, BARELY LITERATE LETTERS AND A HANDFUL OF BUTT-KISSY ONES. THE MORAL TO THIS MONTH'S LETTERS SECTION: DON'T ANGER THE MIELKE

PROPS TO THE ARTISTES

The main reason I'm writing is that I myself am a Graphic Designer and I would like to send ultra mad props to Caroline King and Gerry Serrano. *GMR* has the best layout and design I've seen in any of the game mags and I love all the cool vector art you've been using on recent covers. Oh, and to increase my chances of getting this in the mag...you guys suck and um...you only like PS2 and stuff.

Jason Clark

HANG UP AND DRIVE

First off, wicked job on the magazine. This is my first subscription to a gaming magazine and it will be my only one because you guys rock. Anyway, I wanna put a videogame system in my Acura EL, but what should I do? Should I put in a PlayStation 2 and invest more than a grand (CDN) to do so? Or do I go the cheaper way and just invest in a PSOne and the LCD screen?

Marko Djordjevic
Ottawa, Ontario

We'll tell you what you should do: Go volunteer your time at a homeless shelter or something, because you obviously have too much free time and money on your hands, you spoiled brat.

LOOKING SLICK

When you interview people, you have a full page picture of the people in *GTA: Vice City*–style art. How do you do that from a regular pic? *Photoshop* or something? I wanna know—it looks COOL! And I wanna make myself a pic of me standing next to Lara Croft, too

K. Adriano

Actually, an artist by the name of Arthur Mount (www.arthurmount.com) is the mad genius behind so many of *GMR*'s illustrations. Check out that dope render of the Fist!

AUTO WAONGELLISTA

To James Mielke:

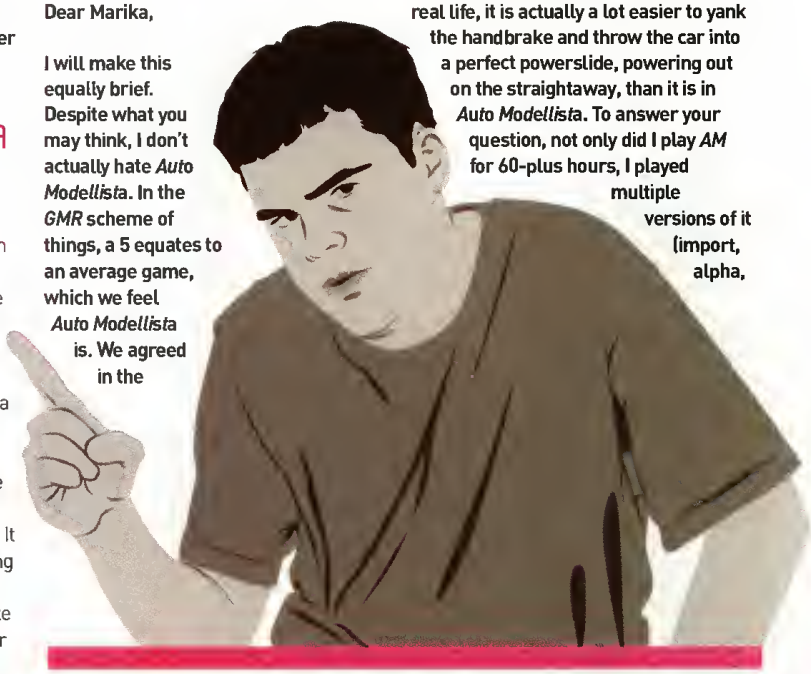
OK, I'll try to make this brief. I have been enjoying this magazine and have generally agreed with most of the game reviews. Then I came to your review on an innovative new game called *Auto Modellista*. I was shocked to see that it received a 5 out of 10, marking it a failure as a game! I have played the game myself, and my boyfriend beat it just the other day. Like any racing game out there, you have to get used to the handling, but it didn't ruin the game all. It was easy to catch on to, and the handling enabled you to make some pretty badass-looking drifts. What it seems like to me is that you picked up the game for about 3 seconds, couldn't figure it out, and then gave your COVER GAME a terrible review. Just because it wasn't exactly like *Ridge Racer* or *GT* (even though it was fairly similar to *GT*, just a little more slick), you gave it a bad rap. I don't see how such an addictive, easy-to-grasp, stylish, and just plain fun game can get such a bad review. I'd like to commend Capcom on its originality, and I hope *GMR* does the same.

Marika van Eerde

Mielke responds:

Dear Marika,

I will make this equally brief. Despite what you may think, I don't actually hate *Auto Modellista*. In the *GMR* scheme of things, a 5 equates to an average game, which we feel *Auto Modellista* is. We agreed in the review that it looks fantastic, has loads of features, and has a great sense of speed. But our score still stands. If you've ever been in an automobile before, I'm sure you've noticed that real cars don't handle like the ones in *AM*. The last time I was driving a Toyota Supra, I didn't start to powerslide as soon as I touched the steering wheel. And when I make right turns, I don't fall into a 180-degree spinout. I spent time at the Skip Barber Racing School (www.skipbarber.com), and throwing V-turns all day long in a Dodge Viper taught me that even in such a beast, in real life, it is actually a lot easier to yank the handbrake and throw the car into a perfect powerslide, powering out on the straightaway, than it is in *Auto Modellista*. To answer your question, not only did I play *AM* for 60-plus hours, I played multiple versions of it (import, alpha,



WRITE US: GMR@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

beta, disco), all the while hoping Capcom would fine-tune the handling to acceptable levels. In my opinion, that didn't happen. Last, just because a game makes it onto our cover doesn't grant it review-o-matic immunity. It falls under the same criteria as any other game and will be reviewed as such. It's our job to tell the truth.

WORD!

I was a quick subscriber to your magazine and I just wanna say your magazine is tite and usually new mags are weak but yours is a very good magazine and your magazine is always with me when I'm in the studio and doubles nicely as a tray, thanx.

Apokalypse, C.E.O of Angel Townz Most Wanted Wreckadz

Umm, just exactly what kind of tray are you referring to, Mr. Lypse?

GMA AAP

Listen up,

To da G to da M to da R
Trying to compete with da formula
And all da other mag, e'zine's
Day scared shizzless, cuz day are fine
Pushing da bear-e-er, out of da dear-e-er
Truning it up loud, hear this fresh sound
Da *GMR*, pushing da bar, too damn far,
Out of da reach, by da other car
Because its a race, and *GMR*,
They've set da pace

Brought to you by:
John R. Noyes

John, we think we may be able to hook you up with a recording contract. Have you heard of Angel Townz Most Wanted Wreckadz?

YEE-HAW!

Hey, quick shots on your racing feature: I live in Michigan and I do not appreciate your comments on all NASCAR fans being drunken hillbillies. I'm a huge NASCAR fan, and I'm under 21 and can't buy alcohol. Otherwise, however, that comment is correct. And a correction: You noted Mark Martin's Viagra machine



as the #5. Hey, dumbasses! Martin is the #6, Terry Labonte is the #5 (driving for Kelloggs). Please slap whoever wrote that article.

The Vigilante

We went one better than slapping the writer of the NASCAR section; we punished him "*Deliverance* style." Squeal!

YODA BOMB

Hello, I'm a loyal fan of your magazine. In it, I see the goodness of *EGM* but with some originality. To the point, I happen to own the PS2 game *Ico* and I think it is a very underappreciated work of art. The rumors I hear that there may be a sequel, is this true? And if so, is it coming to the United States. The other rumor I heard was that in the Japanese one, Yorda never makes it out of the castle. Is this true? And if she did, how the hell did she do it?

Woodman

1) In the Japanese version of the game Yorda makes it out of the castle, just as in the U.S. version. And if you beat the game twice, *Ico* can actually pick up a watermelon and eat it with Yorda on the beach. Anyway, the rumors regarding an *Ico* sequel are true, and if you need the info, turn to page 24 for the full scoop. This is what happens when you treat small animals with kindness.

PRO GAMER

Hey, I just wanted to know how to become a full-time gamer as a profession. I've heard about people entering contests and being a professional gamer. It would be nice if you could tell me any websites or references I could use to answer my question. Thanks!

Cliff Jones

You just keep dreamin' those big ole dreams, Cliff! The odds of making any real money as a pro gamer are slim. But you can always parlay your enthusiasm for games into a real job in the industry. Many people break in as game testers.

COPY CATS

When *Onimusha* first came out on the PS2, I loved the game. It had good graphics, good fights, the predictable but sweet main character, and a good ending. A few months later, I got to see Cartoon Network's new show *Samurai Jack* (finally, GOOD American anime dammit!!). Anyway, after watching the first two episodes, I thought they were pretty much the same, especially the main characters from the game and anime. The only difference was that Jack was sent to the future and was fighting in a futuristic setting. Now I hear that *Onimusha 3* is coming out, and guess what? There's time traveling in that game. Now, I ain't sure if Samonosuke will go into the future or not, but if he does, it'd be just like *Samurai Jack*, don't you think?

D. Allen

No D., we think you got your hands on some bad sushi, that's what we think.

JUST SAD

I met a girl recently. I had almost given up hope that I would meet such a person that would bring me so much happiness and satisfaction. She treats me just right, and she leaves me wanting more all the time. I can hardly wait until she arrives at my door looking up at me, waiting for me to spend time with her. She's wonderful, funny, looks great, gives me much joy, she's perfect. Her name is...*GMR*. Yes, I have fallen in love with your magazine. You are the best magazine out there so keep up the great work! You can count on my subscription to your magazine until the day I die! *GMR* 4 Life!

Jordin Ward

Thanks, we think. But you need a real girlfriend, stat. And no, Caroline is not available. Sorry.



Send a money order for $1.00 and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to GMR Circulation, Attn. B. Jarrett, 28 East 28th Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY, 10016 to get ten percent off pre-owned game purchases for ten months at Electronics Boutique/EB Games stores with the GMR Limited Edition EB Edge Card.

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FRONT

GMR NEWS NETWORK



IN THE NEWS

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EXTRA LIFE!

GORDON AND HIS CROWBAR ARE BACK IN HALF-LIFE 2

BREAKING NEWS

In the biggest PC gaming news of the year, sure to send fanboys into a spiraling tizzy of conjecture and rumormongering, Valve Software has announced that it will be releasing *Half-Life 2* sometime later this year.

Valve has really released only one game in its seven year history, and that's the classic first-person shooter *Half-Life*. Now, like some kind of early Christmas present—after years of giftless yuletides—*Half-Life 2* is finally confirmed. Praise Xen. Details are extremely sketchy at this point (or at least the details that Valve would let us in on), but we'll tell you what little we do know so far.

If you've never played or even heard of *Half-Life*, here's a quick synopsis: You are Gordon Freeman, a mild-mannered scientist working on a top-secret government teleportation project in the bowels of the Black Mesa research facility. There's an accident and things go to hell in a handbasket, so you must fight your way out through aliens and military death-squads sent in to "clean up the mess."



You'll still be playing as Gordon in *Half-Life 2*, but the action will take place some time after *Half-Life*. It can be assumed that he's working for the government again, since at the end of *Half-Life*, you're given the choice of that or a very unpleasant death, but beyond that, who knows, although aliens are almost certain to be a part of the mix again.

Half-Life 2's next-generation engine—called Source—is completely proprietary to Valve and will be used for future Valve products. It has already been licensed to third-party developers for use in their games, including one that will be revealed at this year's E3. Source boasts a full physics simulation system as well as cutting-edge graphics. It also seems to be a good medium for making realistic in-game characters—or "artificial actors" as Valve is calling them—with the help of what it's calling "contextual A.I." Sounds fancy.

Rest assured, actual live gameplay will be shown at E3 this year on PC's using ATI technology, although Valve is saying the final game won't be exclusive to any one videocard, as rumors have claimed. And no, it won't be out on Xbox first, only the PC version will be out this year. But if you want more information, including actual screenshots of this long-awaited title, check out the June issue of *GMR*'s sister mag *Computer Gaming World*.

_More info at www.computergaming.com

VALVE NEWS

SO WHAT ELSE HAS VALVE SOFTWARE BEEN UP TO LATELY?



Valve has announced a deal with Activision that gives the publisher exclusive publishing rights to all of Valve's upcoming PC releases. The first game released under the new agreement is *Day of Defeat*, a WWII-based mod for *Half-Life* originally developed and made freely available by independent mod makers, but brought in-house for this retail release. The game has already drawn comparisons to *Counter-Strike*, has a huge fan base, and should bring its exciting multiplayer-only action to lots more fans thanks to Valve.

INFOMANIA!
THE LATEST ON...



SECRET WEAPONS

Hot on the heels of its first successful expansion pack (*Road to Rome*), *Battlefield 1942* is due for another add-on, and this one looks like a doozy. *Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons* adds eight new maps and a slew of new vehicles and weapons to the mix, but it's those items' nature that makes the game interesting; they're all experimental and/or little-used weapons of the era, including the Horton HO 229 Flying Wing, German Wasserfall guided missiles, the Natter rocket plane, and the Sturmtiger tank. But the one thing that looks like the most fun is a German prototype rocket-pack that allows infantry to fly while fighting.

Gameplay additions should freshen up *Battlefield*'s far-from-stale gameplay. The inclusion of the C-47 cargo plane means Allied players will have a mobile spawn point, and a new objective-based game mode will mix things up from the standard capture points. *Secret Weapons* ships late summer.

XB
PC
PS2
GC

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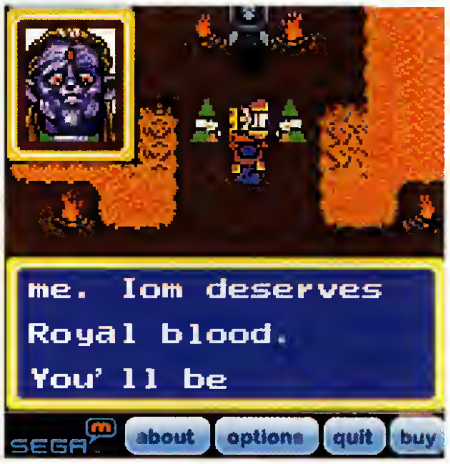
Supply your own subtitles for the wacky characters in these short foreign movie clips. Load 'em up with in-jokes and send them to your friends—hours of Bollywoodian hilarity will ensue.







→ *Kirby's Air Ride* was originally planned as an N64 game before it was scrapped. Apparently, there were too many N64 games. Could the pink puff's resurrection be the work of former HAL chief and current NCL president Satoru Iwata? Probably.



PDA YOUR PANTS!

PALM GETS ON THE GAMING BANDWAGON

USA

Now that the technology bubble has burst, the former red-headed stepchild of the technology industry—gaming—is the favorite son. With yearly proceeds that rival what Hollywood pulls in at the box office, it's no surprise that companies are looking at gaming to help them stay in (or get in) the black. With that in mind, Palm has teamed up with outfits like Sega, Ubi Soft, and PopCap to bring a gang of games to the PDA market.

Timed to coincide with the launch of Palm's newest playthings, the Zire 71 ($299) and the Tungsten C ($499), expect to see boxed copies of Palm-based Sega titles like *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine*, and *Shinobi* on store shelves. Gamers will also welcome Ubi Soft's *Rayman*, as well as a five-game puzzle-pack from PopCap with *Bejeweled*, *Mummy Maze*, *Seven Seas*, *Alchemy*, and *Atomica*.

While playing games on a PDA isn't new, Palm's approach to getting PDA users excited about playing games is. Previously, people had to download game titles to their Palms; now, companies are taking advantage of the Zire 71's and Tungsten C's SD expansion slots by offering SD memory cards, called PalmPak Game Cards. In other words, getting games for your Palm will now be as simple as buying a game, dropping the card into the device, and installing it.

The Tungsten C is considered the daddy of Palm's lineup and ships with 64MB of internal memory, a mini-keyboard, and built-in 802.11b wireless support. The Zire 71, at $299, is more of an entry-level device and has 16MB of internal memory (expansion cards are available), but its real claim to fame is the built-in digital camera that slides up, allowing users to take pretty good pictures at 640x480. Both devices will ship with the RealOne media player, which plays MP3s and WMAs and also has the ability to play video files in a number of formats.

_William O'Neal

_More info at www.palm.com

[BLIPS]

Add One More to the Resume

Poet, author, actor, rock star, and all-around intense individual Henry Rollins has signed on with Vivendi Universal to provide the voice for Mace Griffin in the upcoming game of the same name. Rollins' voice is a good match for the tough-guy bounty hunter, but no word yet on if the character model will accurately portray his massive neck.

PlayStation 2 SP?

Sony is taking a page out of Nintendo's playbook: releasing new and improved (on the inside) PS2 hardware. The new model (slated only for Japan so far) hosts a variety of new features: DVD progressive scan, recordable DVD playback, a built-in receiver for a new remote control, the removal of the firewire port, and a quieter fan.

ICED CUBE?

NINTENDO CHILLED BY RECENT FINANCIAL REPORTS

JAPAN

Woe is Nintendo. Despite stellar recent successes (*Metroid Prime*, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, and GBA SP) from the house that Miyamoto built, not to mention aggressive bundling and price cuts, the company's been hard hit by a slew of bad news.

In early April, Japan's *Nikkei Industrial*, a leading financial newspaper, announced that Capcom is currently reevaluating its stance on the *Resident Evil* franchise—specifically, whether further installations in its cash-cow series might come to non-Nintendo consoles. A statement posted on Capcom's website diplomatically insisted that neither *Resident Evil* nor *Resident Evil 4* would be coming to additional consoles, and that *RE4* was (still) going to be released for GameCube. In the videogame business, we call this dodging the issue.

A few days later, Nintendo declared that its full-year profits had fallen by nearly 40 percent, due largely to lagging GameCube sales. At financial year's end, Nintendo had shipped 4.4 million GameCubes, far fewer than its estimate of 10 million. Nintendo Chief Financial Officer Yoshihiro Mori, putting a customarily efficient Japanese spin on the matter, declared that "GameCube sales were bad worldwide."

Seeking to ford the growing console gap, the company recently announced that it would be trimming the royalty rates charged to outside game developers to develop for its consoles. Understandably, powerhouse developers such as Capcom, Namco, and Sega need convincing that given Nintendo's current slump it's still a worthwhile endeavor. Even for the undisputed king of in-house franchises, third-party support is not to be ignored. An example of an independently published system-selling smash-hit? Take-Two Interactive's *Vice City*, which has sold just as many copies since its November release as Nintendo has GameCubes in the last year.

It's not all bad news, though; publishing giant EA has recently reaffirmed its commitment to the Cube—and where there are sports games, there are sales. Furthermore, GBA hardware and software sales exceeded forecasts, and the explosive success of *Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire* in Japan has propelled the company back to No. 1 software-publisher status (briefly held by Konami and its *Poké*-esque line of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* games) to the tune of 4.2 million units. Nintendo fans had better hope that the recent U.S. release of those games has equally sturdy legs, lest the company go the way of another equally revered console maker gone strictly software: Sega.



→ Fare thee well, Gamecube?

_More info at www.nintendo.com

WINGS OF GLORY

MICROSOFT TAKES TO THE AIR(WAVES)

USA

In honor of the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' historic first powered flight, Microsoft and the Discovery Wings Channel (a subsidiary of the Discovery Channel) are jointly producing a documentary called *Flight Simulator* and a subsequent series called *Learning to Fly*, which will feature Microsoft's upcoming *Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight*. Likewise, historical footage produced by Discovery Wings will function as in-game cinematics.

A Century of Flight marks the 20th anniversary of the long-running *Flight Simulator* series and features nine aircraft that changed the world, including Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*, the Douglas DC-3 and the original Wright Flyer. Other improvements include an updated dynamic weather system, 3D interactive cockpits, and enhanced visuals, making *MSFS 2004* more than just a new collection of the same old planes. *Century of Flight* and *Flight Simulator* take off this July.



→ Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight

FOUND!

GMR SCOURS THE GLOBE



DEAD OR ALIVE: XBV PLAYING CARDS

ORIGIN: JAPAN

Remember a few months back when slapping balls with hot kung-fu chicks was all the rage? If so, you may remember the somewhat rare *DOAX* playing cards that persons who preordered the game from Tecmo's website got? We do! Hell, we've got the fully monty right here! Anyway, word on the street is that Tecmo will release a new set of cards, featuring the girls and swimsuits missing from the first deck. Now it seems any punk can get them at Tecmo's website (www.tecmoinc.com). Playing cards is fun, kids. Just don't play the Full-Knuckle Shuffle.

CLICKS

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www.johnandward.com

We're already working up a sweat in anticipation of the the Xbox enhanced edition of *DDR*. *GMR*'s inspiration? Tom, whose own quest for rhythmic perfection is succinctly captured in the tragicomical documentary *Dance Machine*.

[BLIPS]

The GT Stands for "Good Times"

Sega beat Polyphony to the punch by officially announcing plans to take its *Sega GT* franchise online later this fall. Pluck six lucky friends from the massive Xbox Live pool and compete for money, parts, and pink slips—you can even make disparaging remarks about their sisters via voice chat.

Sega Gets Busy One Time

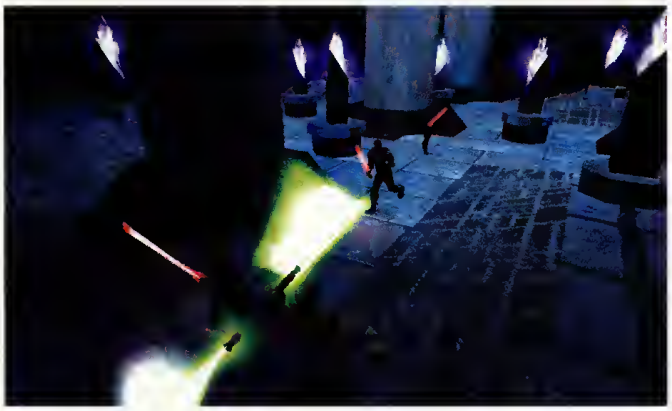
Old-school gamers get psyched: Sega's in retro mode full-time. Hot on the heels of last year's *Shinobi*, Sega's working on updates to *Altered Beast* (being done by WOW), *Vectorman* (as done by Pseudo, makers of *Cel Damage*), and a new *Sonic* game set to hit all platforms. All.

Clash of the Titans

Microsoft Game Studios and Ensemble Studios have announced the first expansion pack for their successful RTS *Age of Mythology*. *AOM: The Titans* features a new race (the Atlanteans), loads more god powers, and scads more human and mythical units to pile on top of the Greco-goodness.







XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

LEARN YOU WILL

DON'T BE A JEDI SCHOOL DROPOUT

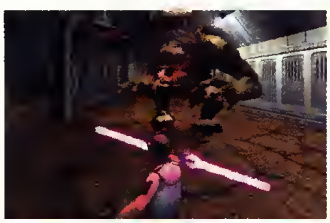
USA

It's not about the size of your lightsaber, but how you learn to use it. As we go to press, word has it that LucasArts is working on *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy* for PC, and unlike previous *Jedi Knight* games, you'll have a lot more control over those nifty Force powers here.

You start off by creating a highly customizable character. Pick a species, gender, skin tone, facial pattern, and outfit. The final number of choices for each isn't clear yet, but it's safe to say there will be only two choices for gender...we think. Next comes the interesting part: selecting a lightsaber. Not only can you modify the hilt and blade color, but you also choose your fighting style. You can grab the traditional saber, get in touch with your inner Darth Maul using a saber staff, or go for the dual-saber approach *Episode II* popularized. Your character's moves depend on how you arm yourself. Take the saber staff, for example. It's perfect for fighting off hordes of enemies with sweeping kicks and spinning blades. The single saber approach, by comparison, is all about stabbing and slashing.

Brett Tosti, *Jedi Academy*'s producer, is already promising big tweaks in the form of enhanced Force powers, a wider variety of *Star Wars* universe locales, and a much-greater level of graphical detail. The average *Jedi Knight: Outcast* character consists of 10,000 polygons; this time around, that figure has been doubled. Further details remain sketchy, but Tosti promises many more surprises when the game ships later this year.

_Darren Gladstone





_More info at www.lucasarts.com

GAMEPORT VITAL GAME INFO. NOW BOARDING...

Arrivals COMING SOON

SYSTEM	ETA	TITLE	HOW HOT?
GBA	MAY	**WARIOWARE, INC.** A collection of bizarre microgames, including old NES favorites.	3
XBOX	MAY	**BRUTE FORCE** No online play, but new content can be downloaded via Xbox Live	4
XBOX	MAY	**RTCW: TIDES OF WAR** The newly added co-op mode doubles your killing pleasure	4
ALL	MAY	**ENTER THE MATRIX** The amazing new *Reloaded* trailer gets our hopes up...a little.	2
PC	MAY	**PLANETSIDE** A persistent world of never-ending war. In other words, like real life.	4
GC	JUNE	**F-ZERO GC** Going 1,310kph in a 900kph zone? That's a $40 ticket, mister.	5
PC	JUNE	**DEUS EX 2: THE INVISIBLE WAR** Much, much harder to fight than visible wars.	4
GC	JUNE	**SONIC ADVENTURE DX** The director's cut includes every Game Gear *Sonic* game ever.	1
GC	JUNE	**WARIO WORLD** Hopefully, E3 will reveal more info about this Treasure platformer.	3
ALL	JUNE	**STREET RACING SYNDICATE** You do realize that a huge spoiler makes you look like a dork?	3
GBA	JUNE	**ADVANCE WARS 2** The battle rages on: new units, new COs, and new enemies.	5
PS2	JULY	**APE ESCAPE 2** The monkeys return! Cheers to Ubi Soft for picking up Sony's slack.	2
PS2	JULY	**CHAOS LEGION** Imagine *Devil May Cry 2*, only with more fun.	3
ALL	JULY	**BACKYARD WRESTLING** Thirty-four brain-dead idiots died in the making of this game.	1
XBOX	JULY	**STAR WARS: KOTOR** It's like Episode -MMCXLVIII.	4
PC	JULY	**STAR WARS GALAXIES** Look for the *GMR* cantina band, Ain't Afraid of Soy, nightly on Tatooine.	5

DEPARTURES OUT NOW

SYSTEM	TITLE	GMR SCORE
PS2	**AUTO MODELLISTA** Even disappointing games make the cover sometimes.	5/10
PS2	**DYNASTY WARRIORS 4** More of the same good gameplay, but more of the same nonetheless.	6/10
PC	**RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD** Abbreviated, it's *R63RS*, which sounds like a foreign sports car.	8/10
GC	**IKARUGA** Our frothing demand for this game is more or less satiated.	7/10
XB	**TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS** Can we please get more imagination than Fierce Tiger? Please?	4/10
PS2	**MOTOGP 3** Namco adds specific braking, but the 16th GP course continues to elude.	8/10
PC	**NASCAR 2003** Papyrus gives the genre one last good-bye, and it's fantastic.	9/10
PS2	**AMPLITUDE** Weezer and Run DMC rock the new soundtrack, which is also online.	8/10
XB	**STATE OF EMERGENCY** The new additions and cheap price make a bad game mediocre.	5/10
PC	**FREELANCER** In space, no one can hear you blow up into itty-bitty pieces.	8/10
PS2	**SPLINTER CELL** Even after the expected graphical hit, it's still *Splinter Cell*.	8/10
PS2	**PRIMAL** For fans of the "walk around pretty environments" genre only.	5/10
GBA	**GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE** If you haven't played the first one, you might be a little lost yourself.	8/10
ALL	**NBA STREET VOL. 2** The new king of arcade basketball punks all others.	9/10
PS2/GC	**DEF JAM: VENDETTA** Solid groundwork has been laid for the eventual sequels.	7/10
PS2/XBOX	**COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3** Plenty of realism, but short on the features and extras.	8/10

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THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



JOHN DAVISON

PS2 ONLINE

PS2 online gaming is finally reaching the point where people are starting to take notice, and in coming months, we're quite likely to see numerous announcements about games getting their act online.

Even with some pretty heinous disasters, like Sony Online's *EverQuest Online Adventures*, several success stories are turning the tide.

Auto Modellista, despite being a mind-bogglingly awful racing game, is proving remarkably popular. *Midnight Club 2* is a great online experience (and not as difficult as the single-player version), which seems to be getting people excited.

Most significant, though, is *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*, which has exceeded everyone's expectations. Not only is it the driving force behind Network Adaptor sales, but it's also currently the second most popular online game on any system, including PC (with the exception of MMORPGs), behind only *Counter-Strike*, or so we're told.

Over a million copies of the game have been sold, and there are more than 300,000 active registered user names. On any given day between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. EST, there are 13,000 or more *SOCOM* players online.

With this in mind, it's no surprise a sequel is in the works. Expect to see some incredible *SOCOM 2* screens in the coming months.

John Davison is Editor-in-Chief of the Official PlayStation Magazine.

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

GMR CHARTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH EB GAMES electronics boutique

THE TOP-SELLING GAMES FOR EVERY SYSTEM FOR MAR. '03

TOP 10 ALL FORMATS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT	SCORE
01	**THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWW** — It's a no-brainer that *Zelda*'s at No. 1 this month, but what about next?	GC	9
02	**POKEMON RUBY** — Take that *Yu-Gi Oh!* Who said the little yellow fiend was dead?	GBA	7
03	**POKEMON SAPPHIRE** — See above.	GBA	7
04	**DEF JAM: VENDETTA** — Where the hell is Slick Rick? He'd be breakin' some fools off.	PS2	7
05	**DYNASTY WARRIORS 4** — Koei's new dynasty might not rule us, but it has got quite a few of you under its control.	PS2	6
06	**MVP BASEBALL 2003** — With seven baseball games to choose from, it never hurts to go with a publisher you know.	PS2	7
07	**TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN** — Ninjas. You know how we feel about ninjas.	PS2	8
08	**SHADOWBANE** — Apparently, you MMORPGers needed something new.	PC	8
09	**ZOE: THE 2ND RUNNER** — The Zoradius minigame is worth at least $5 of that $50 price tag. Maybe $6.	PS2	8
10	**WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3** — Yeah, it's a really good game, but we won't rest until *High Heat* cracks the top 10.	PS2	8

PS2 TOP 10

		SCORE
01	DEF JAM: VENDETTA	7
02	DYNASTY WARRIORS 4	6
03	MVP BASEBALL 2003	7
04	TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN	8
05	ZOE: 2ND RUNNER	8
06	XENOSAGA	9
07	AUTO MODELLISTA	5
08	SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS	9
09	WSB 2K3	8
10	EQ ONLINE ADVENTURES	8

XBOX TOP 10

		SCORE
01	WORLD SERIES BASEBALL 2K3	8
02	TAO FENG	4
03	MVP BASEBALL 2003	7
04	THE SIMS	9
05	SPLINTER CELL	9
06	GHOST RECON	8
07	SHENMUE 2	7
08	STATE OF EMERGENCY	5
09	UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP	8
10	HALO	10

PC TOP 10

		SCORE
01	SHADOWBANE	8
02	RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD	8
03	BLACK HAWK DOWN	7
04	C&C: GENERALS	6
05	FREELANCER	8
06	GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS	8
07	VIETCONG	8
08	BF1942	9
09	BF1942: ROAD TO ROME	7
10	EQ: LEGEND OF YKESHA	5

GBA TOP 10

		SCORE
01	POKEMON RUBY	7
02	POKEMON SAPPHIRE	7
03	LEGEND OF ZELDA	9
04	SONIC ADVANCE	7
05	METROID FUSION	9
06	MEGA MAN & BASS	7
07	GOLDEN SUN	9
08	YU-GI-OH! OUNGEON	6
09	ADVANCE WARS	8
10	SUPER MARIO WORLD	9

GC TOP 10

		SCORE
01	LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWW	9
02	METROID PRIME	10
03	DEF JAM: VENDETTA	7
04	THE SIMS	9
05	RESIDENT EVIL 0	8
06	ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2004	7
07	RAYMAN 3	5
08	SKIES OF ARCADIA	8
09	GHOST RECON	8
10	SONIC MEGA COLLECTION	8

[TALENT]

ROBERT ATKINS

YOU DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. BUT YOU'LL PLAY HIS GAMES.



"I just don't get what's so funny about [the movie] *Office Space*." This coming from a guy who never worked in a button-downed office his entire life and has "Bad Ass Motherfker" printed on his business cards. Over the years, Robert Atkins has worked on the likes of *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake III: Scourge of Armagon*, *SIN*, and *Heavy Metal FAKK2*. These days, he and the boys at Ritual Entertainment have a lot going on.**

After three years of nearly making games for EA (all scrubbed for various reasons), this once-small developer is currently 50-people strong. Now, it's cranking out not only the impressive-looking *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Forces II*, but it's also putting the finishing touches on *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*. Both are expected out by June and, according to Atkins, will show how design savvy Ritual has gotten.

"The one thing we took away from our time with EA is how to organize and run things. After all, they've been in the business for so long, they know how it's done." On the other hand, he was quick to joke that at one point there were more people to report to at EA than there were developers actually working on the game.

So, how did these guys get these high-profile assignments? Partly through the work done on *Heavy Metal: FAKK2* and partly due to the talented people brought in from other Dallas-based developers (you know, small companies like Id and 3D Realms). The toughest part of Rob's job right now is working right above a bar. "The jams are pumping out every night and you can hear hordes of honeys screaming up through the floor. I need something to block out the bar sirens' song!"

Don't let their discipline fool you, though. When they aren't knocking out games, they're knocking back drinks. Check out www.ritual.com for their pictures of "Levelord's Legendary League of Leaky Livers."

_Darren Gladstone

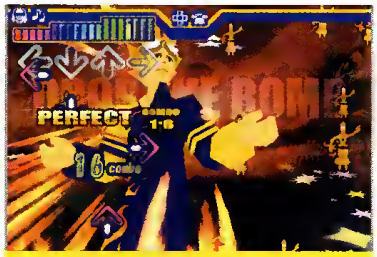
KONAMI'S XBOX REVOLUTION

X MARKS THE SPOT FOR RHYTHM SIM

JAPAN

A brand-new user base is about to discover that it has no rhythm: Konami has announced that it will be bringing its popular *Dance Dance Revolution* franchise to Xbox. Not simply a port of previous mixes, the new *DDR* will possess features designed specifically for the Microsoft console, including new, never-before-seen modes and the possibility of a new and enhanced official dance pad (though there will certainly be a host of third-party mats for the discriminating dancer to choose from).

But whenever there's mention of Xbox-specific enhancements, one's thoughts automatically gravitate to Xbox Live support. Konami is definitely considering adding online options—a first for the franchise—which may (or may not) include downloadable steps, additional characters, and even new songs and remixes. No word yet on online competitive play or support for custom soundtracks (if there can be new steps and new songs, why not have both?), but *GMR* expects Konami to stop dancing around the issue and bring the details to E3.



→ Dance Dance Revolution for Xbox

[BLIPS]

Koei Announcements

Koei gave us an exclusive peek under the petticoats at some of its upcoming releases for this year. They include *Crimson Sea* for PS2 and *Dynasty Warriors 4* for Xbox. The PS2-exclusive *Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends* should come Stateside sometime later in the year

Game to Movie Capsule News

Mindfire Entertainment—which holds the film rights to Tecmo's *DOA* series—plans to have a movie out in 2004. Gaga Communications' *Tekken* flick shoots this September; the company has plans for *Onimusha*, too. And Jean-Claude Van Damme is apparently up for another shot as Col. Guile in a second *Street Fighter* "film." Be still our cynical hearts

PC KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



JEFF GREEN

FLATLINERS

OK, so *The Sims Online* didn't take over the planet like everyone and their grandma and *Newsweek* said it would. What are ya gonna do? Wil Wright and all the people at Maxis are still geniuses, and they may come back with this thing yet.

In the meantime, the PC gaming world still awaits the Next Coming in the massively multiplayer RPG world. *Asheron's Call 2*? Nice game, but needs a personality injection. *Earth and Beyond*? No. *Shadowbane*? Just kidding.

No, the hope lies with The Big Boys—such as the games on this very magazine's cover. If anyone can prove that the success of *EverQuest* on PC isn't a fluke, it's going to be triple-A developers with sure-fire franchises like *Star Wars* and *WarCraft*. If these guys can't convince gamers to pay a monthly fee for their games, well, maybe it's time to scratch the whole idea and get back to golf and turn-based war games.

The really exciting news this month should be going public as you read this. For over a year now, Origin Systems (*Ultima Online*), has been quietly woodshedding *Ultima X*—its new MMORPG. And it's going to surprise you. I can't say anything else just yet, except maybe three quick words: *Unreal Warfare* engine. Watch this one. EA surprised everyone when *Battlefield 1942* showed up out of nowhere last year. They may do it again.

_Jeff Green is Editor-in-Chief of *Computer Gaming World*

XB
PC

NINTENDO
KNOWLEDGE
THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



PHIL THEOBALD

WAKING LIFE

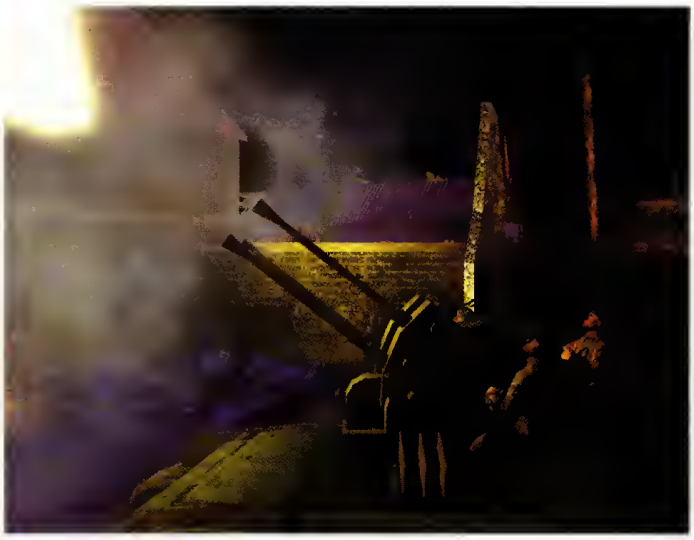
OK, now that I've played a heckuvalotta *Wind Waker*, I can officially say it. Everyone out there who is still bitching and moaning about the cel-shaded, "kiddie" look of the game is dumb.

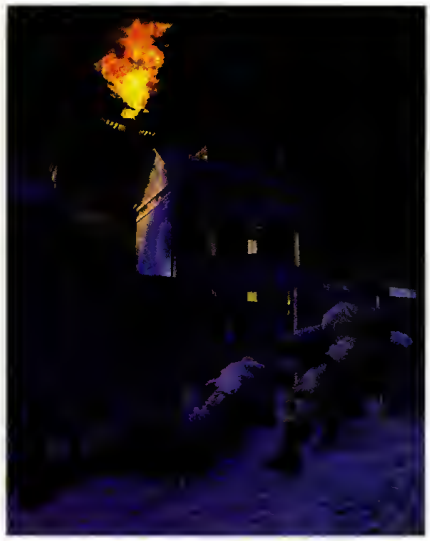
Let me guess. The only *Zelda* adventure you've ever played is *Ocarina of Time*. Now you're convinced the only Link is the macho, late-teen swordsman in that fantastic title—never mind the fact that the "older" Link from *OOT* is actually a future incarnation of the game's (and the series') true hero, the young, spritely Link, not the buff stud that *Zelda* n00bs want him to be. These are the people who think *Final Fantasy VII* is the best in the series because it's the first RPG they've actually played.

That's Link's appeal, folks. He's not a generic fantasy hero like so many before (and after) him. He's a wide-eyed, elven lad who has been dealt a pretty heavy fate—saving the world. It's his innocence that makes him appealing, and the look of *Wind Waker* pulls that off spectacularly. Just watch Link's face as you play the game—the emotional array is simply amazing. If "teenage Link" was as expressive as little Link is in *Wind Waker*, it would just look ridiculous.

If you crybabies want your buffed-up Link, get *Soul Calibur 2* for GameCube (get it anyway, it rocks). As for me, I want to adventure with Link the way he was meant to be—a cute little kid.

_Phil Theobald is Reviews Editor at *GameNow*.





ANSWERING THE CALL

ACTIVISION WANTS YOU!

U.S.A.

Activision, in conjunction with new developer Infinity Ward, has announced a new WWII-set first-person shooter for PC that will be the first in a series of games under the same umbrella brand.

Call of Duty is currently being developed by Infinity Ward, which includes over 20 members of the original *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* team from EA. *Call of Duty* is similar to that game, in that it's a first-person shooter set in the European theater of World War II and has a story-driven single-player mode, but that's where the comparisons should stop.

Call of Duty intends to impress upon you the idea that as a soldier, you aren't a one-man army, but part of a much bigger picture when it comes to the war. "No one soldier or one country, single-handedly won the war," says Senior Producer Thaine Lyman, "it was won through the collective efforts of citizen soldiers and unsung heroes from an alliance of countries who together all heeded their call of duty."

There are three main characters you will play as over the course of *Call of Duty*: a paratrooper from the U.S. 101st Airborne, a British paratrooper who later joins the SAS, and lastly, a lowly Russian conscript. You'll see various parts of the war, from D-Day to the Battle of Stalingrad, and do everything from going on secret infiltration missions to being a tank commander. *Call of Duty* wants to give gamers a more complete view of WWII's history.

The game's technology sounds ambitious too, with almost every mission placing you in a squad situation. Having friendly teammates who act like actual human beings requires some pretty advanced A.I., which should carry over to the enemy soldiers as well to create a more immersive experience. As Lyman says, "real soldiers, real war."

Call of Duty, the first announced game in the series, is slated to be on your PC later this year.

_More info at www.activision.com



WAA ON FILM

ACTIVISION HAS BIG PLANS FOR ITS NEW CALL OF DUTY FRANCHISE

Activision already has a WWII-themed feature film in the works based on Id Software's *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, and there could be more in the pipeline. The Santa Monica–based publisher has partnered with new Los Angeles game developer Spark Unlimited to bring *Call of Duty* to next-generation consoles in 2004.

Started by a team of 27 former Dreamworks Interactive and Electronic Arts employees, the new 45-person team is designing an original WWII-based game brand that won't be tied to the ground war like their past incarnation, EA's *Medal of Honor*.

Former Jim Henson Interactive general manager Craig Allen is running the show at Spark, and he sees this WWII brand as the first true example of synergy between Hollywood talent (many of the team members migrated from Hollywood jobs to games) and game makers.

"We're creating the foundation with this game for whatever might be appropriate next," says Allen. "As we grow, there will be opportunities to play in other mediums. We're creating characters and stories with linear entertainment in mind from day one."

The *Call of Duty* games will focus on the human element of WWII, across the battlefields of Europe and North Africa.

Activision, which owns the IP for this new WWII franchise, hopes to utilize Hollywood's infrastructure to enhance the gaming experience.

"The game will feature gritty realism and cinematic intensity that's been seen in movies like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Enemy at the Gates*, but has not been translated to videogames," says Dusty Welch, VP of global brand management. "The presentation, thanks to Hollywood consultants, voice-over talent, and others in the film and TV industry, will have the feel of a Hollywood production."

If the games succeed, look for books, a TV series, and a feature film to follow.

_John Gaudiosi

GAMEPLANNER MAY 2003

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS. AND GAMES.

01

Celebrate May Day by playing *RTX Red Rock* for PS2. Then go dance around a pole in celebration when you beat it.

02

X-Men 2 opens at a theater near you. We might have to see it twice, just because we'll be staring at Kelly Hu the entire time.



03

It's Holy Cross Day in Mexico. If you're a vampire, and our reader research shows that some of you are, you may want to steer clear.

04

Today begins the traditional Kite Battles of Hamamatsu in Japan. Kites will be needlessly slaughtered by the thousands.

05

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo by playing *Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis* on Xbox. If Aqua Man were Mexican, he'd be called Hombre del Agua.



06

Castle Wolfenstein (PS2, Xbox), *Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow* (GBA), *Medieval: Viking Invasion* (PC), *.hack 2* and *Magic Pengel* (PS2), *Day of Defeat* (PC).



08

If Harry S Truman were alive today, he'd be 119 years old. But he's not. He's actually quite dead.

09

10

11

Put down your controller and give your ma a hug on her special day. You could also make her a card crafted from macaroni and puffy glue.

12 E3 WEEK

Oh snap! It's E3 Week! Stay glued to the Internet today, because Capcom, Square, and Microsoft are having their press events.

13 E3 WEEK

Today we'll find out what Sony, Nintendo, and Konami are up to. *Choplifter* (PS2), *Lost Kingdoms 2* (GC), *The Sims: Superstar* (PC).

14 E3 WEEK

It's the show's opening day, which means the first onslaught of playable impressions. The long-awaited *Enter the Matrix* is released.



15 E3 WEEK

Second day of the show. When checking updates at work, be sure to keep your browser window well hidden behind your spreadsheet.

16 E3 WEEK

It's the last day of E3, when the *GMR* crew collapses on the hotel bed, then realizes in a panic that *The Matrix Reloaded* opens today.



17

The U.S. observes Armed Forces Day. Love to the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and the Coast Guard. Everyone always forgets them.



19

Sony Online's MMOFPS *Planetside* is now available for the PC, along with *Rise of Nations* and *Sega Arcade Gallery* for GBA.

20

Today marks Cambodia's official Day of Hatred. Instead of giving your sweetheart flowers or chocolates, sever her head. *Moto GP 2* (Xbox).

21

22

23

Comedian Drew Carey is 45 today. A couple of Sega consoles adorned his self-named sitcom's living-room set. Back when people watched.



25

Mike Myers turns 40 today. It's party time, excellent!

26

Early reports from Japan say Nintendo's new *WarioWare, Inc.* for GBA is the craziest game ever made. We'll find out for sure today

27

New releases: *Brute Force* and *Bloody Roar: Extreme* (Xbox), *The Hulk* (PS2, Xbox, GC), *Mission: Impossible* (PS2), and *Midnight Club II* (PC).

28

29

At least one *GMR* editor will be celebrating Wisconsin Day today. Actually, now that we think about it, he'll probably be the only one.



31

XBOX

KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



EVAN SHAMOON

BETTER ON X?

Since its launch, Xbox has been the proud recipient of the best version of nearly every multiplatform release to date. Thanks to its higher resolution graphics, faster frame-rates, and Dolby 5.1, games like *Hitman 2*, *Battle Engine Aquilla*, countless sports titles, and the forthcoming *Soul Calibur 2* have found their first home on Xbox. But is the console's potential truly being tapped? Hardly.

First, why doesn't anybody make proper use of the hard drive? I spoke to Ed Fries around the time of the Xbox launch, and he told me that your Xbox would load your three most frequently played games onto the hard drive, allowing for gaming experiences without load times. Clearly, this doesn't seem to have panned out.

Secondly, Microsoft has been planning its broadband revolution for over three years, yet many first-party titles are choosing to forego online play. *Brute Force*, *NBA Street Vol. 2*, and *Burnout 2* are perfect candidates for Xbox Live, but none support it. Peering into next year's lineup is a bit worrying as well; I'm not terribly bothered by the fact that Midway's "new-and-improved" extreme sports lineup won't support Live (though it *will* support PS2 online), but will the trend continue amongst other third-party publishers? More on this next month....

_Evan Shamoon is Editor-in-Chief of *Xbox Nation*.

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

CONSUMED

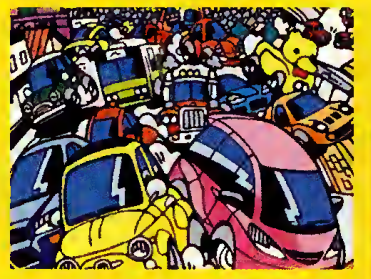
GAME PUBLISHER EATS ANOTHER PUBLISHER. WHAT'S NEW?

JAPAN

Just like Square and Enix and then Sega and Sammy before them, Takara and Atlus have announced they are joining the party and will merge pronto. The details specify that Takara will buy 30.2 percent of Atlus stock to the tune of 1.9 billion yen (approximately $16 million in U.S. greenbacks).

What makes this more intriguing is that Takara is already owned by Konami, who also owns publishers Hudson (*Bomberman*) and Genki (*Phantom Crash*). Atlus will be the fourth publisher to fall under Konami's umbrella, although each subsidiary functions more or less independently. In case you're not familiar with either company, Takara is responsible for the *Choro Q* series, which has appeared in the United States as *Penny Racers* on N64 (it also developed *Seek and Destroy* for PS2), while Atlus is known for its *Persona* series (see *SMT3* below) and the *Ogre Battle/Tactics Ogre* games.

→ Atlus, who scored big with *Super Dodgeball Advance* and *Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis* for GBA, is now in bed with Takara, maker of all things *Choro Q*, Micronauts and—yeah baby—the Transformers. Interestingly, Takara has a *Transformers* game for PS2 in the works. You betcha!







IMPORT SPOTLIGHT

SMT3 (PS2)





If you're wondering what the name *Shin Megami Tensei III: Nocturne* means, we don't blame you. The *SMT* series definitely falls into the niche realm of RPGs. In short, it is the long-awaited sequel to the underrated *Persona* games. *Nocturne* is a dark and stylish RPG unlike anything out there. Not only is the engine as robust as *Final Fantasy X*'s, *Nocturne* also sports the amazing design work of Atlus' Kazuma Kaneko, resulting in an unmatched visual flair.

The fate of the world is in your hands, of course, but not in the traditional sense. *Nocturne*'s world has already been destroyed, and your choices determine what world is born from its twisted remnants. The battles are fast and fun, and hundreds of unique demons can be recruited and fused to fight by your side. Atlus hasn't made any announcements about a U.S. release yet, but says it's under consideration.





OUT OF THE SHADOWS

ICO 2 TO BE REVEALED LATER THIS YEAR?

JAPAN

Fans of innovative, evocative games, get ready to hold hands again. Despite rumors to the contrary, *Ico*'s sequel is indeed underway. With reports surfacing of the *Ico* team working on a project called *Dragon Peace*, it would be easy to assume series' director Fumito Ueda (*Enemy Zero*) has abandoned the horned (not horny) boy and his gal pal, Yorda.

Happily, that is not the case. *Ico 2*, however, is still very early, and the team (which has been beefing up its staff) isn't prepared to show it for some time—the game probably won't ship until 2004. You may recall that the original *Ico* was originally planned for PS1 but then moved to PS2 midway through development. This time around, the team wants to maximize its time and do the series justice. We asked our contact at SCE if it was conceivable that *Ico 2* would instead arrive on PlayStation 3; he says that would not be the case. Hooray!







NINTEND'OH!

PIKMIN 2 TO SHOW AT E3?

JAPAN

Last month we told you about some projects coming from Nintendo in the future, like *Pikmin 2* and *Kirby's Air Ride*. Well, word on the street is we'll actually get to see Captain Olimar and friends at the upcoming E3 convention in Los Angeles. That is, if we can fight our way past the crowd of nonindustry fat kids.

In other news, it looks like *Earthbound* fans—who openly wept at the sight of the game's hero, Ness, in his *Super Smash Bros.* cameo—can begin weeping once again. Nintendo announced that ports of *Mother 1* and *2* are en route to GBA this June in Japan (*Mother 2* is the Japanese name for *Earthbound* for SNES). The good news is that *Mother 3*, once planned for N64 and then cancelled, is back on track and seemingly destined for GBA at some point later this year. No word on whether the games will make it to the States, but the smart money says to count on it. Lastly, Sega's *Shining Soul 2* will hit GBA in Japan this July. Great, but we're still waiting for the first one!











ONLY IN JAPAN

BOBOBOBO BOBOBO (PS2)



No we're not making up names like this, and no, it's not an April Fool's joke. Recently released in Japan, Hudson's *Bobobobo Bobobo: Gagglefest* for PS2 is one of the weirdest videogames we've ever had sick pleasure of playing, and that says a lot. It's like that, see.

Based on the *Weekly Shonen Jump* (a popular weekly comic book in Japan) comic strip *Bobobobo Bobobo*, the game puts you in control of Bobobo, a hero with a blond afro set in the Jim Kelly (*Enter the Dragon*) mold. But instead of using kung fu, Bobobo defeats his enemies using his "Nostril Hair Ultra Fist" technique, which is controlled by both analog sticks.

The simple gameplay typically starts Bobobo at the beginning of a level, from which point he walks toward the player. As he strolls down the path, he fends off would-be assailants from the left and right, slapping them away with his mighty nose hair. Occasionally, he rescues an ally, like Donpachi the little sun sprite, who is a target of much abuse, or picks up a screen-clearing special attack that uses his—wait for it—armpit hair. Depending on your success during the game and level-ending Simon Says exercises, you can unlock special items (like nose hair that showers the enemy in raffle tickets) and abilities (like the Mega Toothbrush entourage that offers moral support). Insane, yes, but featuring one of the most criminally catchy soundtracks we've ever heard, *Bobobo* is gaming haute couture.

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC



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PS1
GBA
PC
GAMECUBE
XBOX
PS2

NEXT



INCOMING GAMES PREVIEWED

PREVIEWED THIS ISSUE:

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC	PC/XB	028
BRUTE FORCE	XB	029
ARC THE LAD 2	PS2	029
DRAGON BALL Z: THE LEGACY OF GOKU II	GBA	029
THE HULK	GC/PS2/XB	030
STREET RACING SYNDICATE	GC/PS2/XB	030
STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II	PC	030
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN	PC/XB	030
SOUL CALIBUR 2	GC/PS2/XB	031
OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS	XB	031
XIII	PC/PS2/XB	031
BILLY HATCHER	GC	032
JAK II	PS2	032
FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL	PS2/XB	032
THE SUFFERING	PC/PS2/XB	032
KYA: DARK LINEAGE	PS2	033
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES	GBA/GC/PC/PS2/XB	033
BLOWOUT	PC/PS2/XB	033

RELEASE | JUNE

STAR WARS: K.O.T.O.R.

SYSTEM PC, XB PUBLISHER LUCASARTS DEVELOPER BIOWARE

BEFORE THE DARK TIMES. BEFORE THE EMPIRE...

What's the worst thing about crafting a *Star Wars* RPG? Everyone wants to wield the freakin' lightsaber, and nobody wants to play as Luke. RPG maestros BioWare and licensing powerhouse LucasArts have teamed up to give gamers the opportunity to live out (almost) all of their *Star Wars* fantasies without treading on Lucas' official canon of events...by setting the action a good 4,000 years before *Episode I*.

Knights of the Old Republic kicks off with the requisite character creation. Choose a gender and class specialty (including scoundrel, scout, and soldier), and then assign skills and characteristics. This character comes in Human flavor only, but any of the nine party members you acquire can be put on point.

During our recent up-close-and-personal time with the game, things appeared to be coming along quite nicely. CG scenes (nearly 80 planned in all) and in-game visuals capture the colorful, worn-down *Star Wars* aesthetic, while NPC dialogue (14,000-plus lines in all) and character-specific aural motifs enhance the space-opera effect. You'll have opportunities for diplomacy and stealth, but if you prefer a straight fight to all this sneaking around, you can always jump into armed combat. It's turn-based, but plays out in real-time, enabling players to craft their strategy on the fly while watching a wild melee of blaster fire, Force powers, and lightsaber swinging.

We also got to check out two of the four planned minigames: racing swoop bikes and manning the *Ebon Hawk*'s turret (see below). Both were pretty, but pretty underwhelming, too. We're hoping Pazak (a card game) and gladiatorial combat provide more-engaging thrills.

KOTOR's most intriguing aspect is the freedom to shape one's destiny—there's a definitive story line, but crucial plot points and side quests offer plenty of leeway. One scenario presents two ways of negotiating a dilemma on the watery planet Manann: the shorter, Sith-ier option (poison an entire ocean), or the more arduous (and Jedi-sanctioned) solution.

Obviously, this freedom to forge your fate could help make *KOTOR* a great game; it could also just be a gimmick. LucasArts has let slip that there are two endings to the game, but won't say which is better—find *that* path for yourself this June.

GMA SAYS → We're confident *KOTOR* will be good, but we're hoping for greatness...

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥









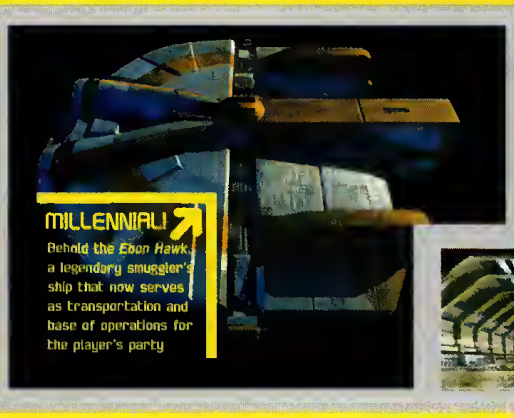


→ Since *KOTOR* takes place a long, long, long time ago, players can upgrade their lightsabers with color crystals apart from the same ol' boring range of red, green, and blue.

TURN LEFT AT HOTH...

BioWare has gone all out designing lavish worlds for this 40-50 hour RPG. Familiar fan-favorite Tatooine (Bantha safari!) pops up, as do Kashyyyk (the Wookiees' woodsy home) and a Padawan proving ground on Dantooine.

Next up are Ahto, a floating spaceport on the entirely submerged world of Manann, and Taris, a rich-eat-poor dystopia (once a bright point in the galaxy). Steer clear of Korriban until you're good and ready—this Sith Lord graveyard still seethes with evil. Planet No. 7 remains a mystery, but we bet it's nowhere near the Lando system....



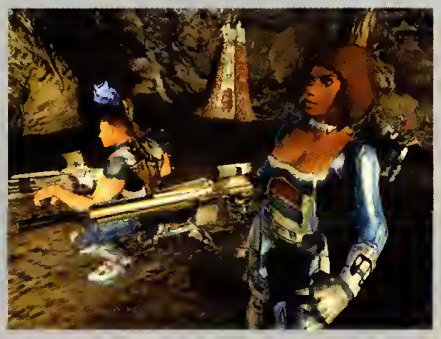
MILLENNIAL! Behold the *Ebon Hawk*, a legendary smuggler's ship that now serves as transportation and base of operations for the player's party







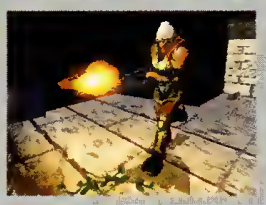






BALLISTIC!
Brute Force features real-time in-game weapons models. Here, Tex (left) shoots off his sweet and lethal cotton-candy cannon.

→ Avert your eyes from Flint's mysterious combat thong for a moment and take note of the various NPC enemies populating these screens. Once unlocked, you'll be able to use these characters in splitscreen or LAN deathmatches.



RELEASE | MAY

BRUTE FORCE

SYSTEM XBOX PUBLISHER MICROSOFT
DEVELOPER DIGITAL ANVIL

ET TU, BRUTE?

You know how there's only one Xbox killer app, a game that launched with the system over two years ago? Well, if everything goes according to plan, Xbox will soon have its next big game with *Brute Force*. While it probably won't surpass the mighty *Halo*, Xbox owners can still look forward to ravaging this innovative third-person shooter this summer.

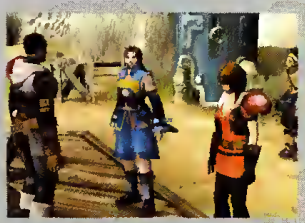
Brute Force puts you in command of four gun-toting stereotypes sent to quash planetary civil strife with extreme prejudice. At your disposal: the beefy heavy-weapons guy, the nimble and stealthy recon chick, a sexy android crack-shot sniper, and a noble savage in the form of a walking, talking lizard.

What sets *Brute Force* apart from your typical third-person shooter is its emphasis on cooperative action, whether it's working hand-in-hand with the game's excellent A.I. or three other buddies. When going at it solo, players not only control each squad member by switching back-and-forth in real-time, but they can also issue commands in the midst of combat to overpower the enemy.

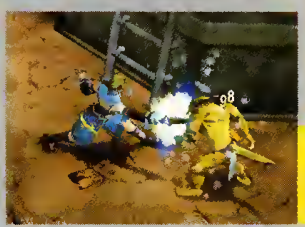
And when you've got company, simply plug in an extra controller (or three), and the screen automagically splits into halves and quarters while you play. *That's* the power of X. Speaking of multiplayer, *Brute Force* also supports system link and the communicator headset for all the LAN-pups in Xbox land. *Brute Force* ships this summer, packed with a bonus *Halo 2* sneak-peek DVD.

GMR SAYS → Don't judge this game, its crappy title, and generic characters before you get hands-on with the goods. Don't hate, celebrate.

→ HOW HOT...







RELEASE | MAY

ARC THE LAD 2: T.O.T.S.

SYSTEM PS2 PUBLISHER SCEA DEVELOPER ATLUS

NOW WITH LESS ARC, MORE LADS!

***Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits*, the first PS2 title in the popular RPG series, takes place thousands of years after the PS1 games. The story follows half-brothers Kharg and Darc, bitter enemies ever since being separated at infancy.**

Twilight of the Spirits features an epic 60-hour story, 15-plus playable characters, and strategic RPG combat. The key word there is "strategic." Positioning multiple characters to support each other and to flank enemies remains crucial to success. Like its predecessors, *Twilight* keeps the pace hopping by alternating fights and story segments, minus the incessant wandering and villager interrogation common to many other RPGs.

The *Arc the Lad* series is known for excellent translation and voice work thanks to Working Designs, the U.S. publisher of the first three games. However, Working Designs isn't involved this time around (Sony's on publishing duty), and the translation in the preview version we played was awkward. We'll keep our fingers crossed.

GMR SAYS → Sixty hours of engaging genre gaming? Why yes, we are interested.

→ HOW HOT...

DRAGON BALL Z: THE LEGACY OF GOKU II

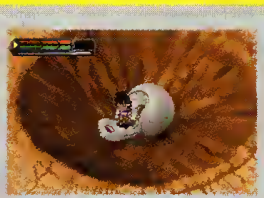
SYSTEM GBA PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES DEVELOPER WEB FOOT

If your eyes popped straight out of your head at the prospect of playing as Goku, Gohan, or Trunks in Infogrames' mostly mediocre GBA RPG *Dragon Ball Z: Legacy of Goku*, then you probably don't need us to tell you to pick up this sequel...or not. Infogrames boasts this installment will last three or four times longer than the first, which should put total gameplay at about...oh, 12-16 hours.

RELEASE | JUNE

→ HOW HOT...







XB
PS2
GBA

RELEASE | MAY

THE HULK

SYSTEM GC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL DEVELOPER RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT

MEET THE NOT-SO-JOLLY GREEN GIANT

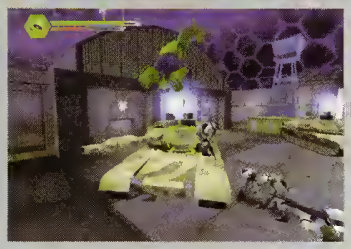
Despite Dr. Banner's admonitions, we quite like him when he's angry, because then he becomes the Hulk and punches things with fists the size of watermelons. Set one year after the upcoming movie, this beat-em-up chronicles Banner's continuing quest to rid himself of his violent alter ego. Characters from both movie and comics appear in the game's story, which expands upon the flick with 30-40 minutes of cut-scenes (with voice work by the film's Eric Bana).

The Hulk turns up the mayhem with a fair variety of attacks—both simple to learn and, uh, also simple to master. In addition to the expected punches (watermelons, guys, seriously), the Hulk can pick up crates or pipes (or enemies) and pummel bad guys with 'em. Fights happen in a series of discrete areas that get plenty wrecked before the Incredible one moves on.

But you don't spend all your time in green skin. Bruce Banner's *Metal Gear Solid*-lite levels involve sneaking around and hacking security computers. According to the publisher, "players must master the art of not turning into the Hulk in key Banner missions to succeed." We'd much rather master the art of smashing the holy hell out of everything.

GMA SAYS → This brawler is aimed at the mainstream. Expect accessible over exceptional

→ HOW HOT...





RELEASE | SUMMER

STREET RACING SYNDICATE

SYSTEM GC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER 3DO DEVELOPER EUTECHNYX LTD.

SHE LIKES YOU 'CAUSE YOU DRIVE FAST

***Gran Turismo* is fun and all, what with the parts and the engines and all that, but what good is tweaking out your ride when all it gets you is an extra 0.4 seconds? Wouldn't you rather be racing for money, pink slips, and the undivided attention of that certain young lady in the short skirt and almost-too-revealing top? 3DO seems to think so, hence the existence of racy racer *Street Racing Syndicate*.**

Set in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Miami, *SRS* lets you tune up your car with various official aftermarket parts; you'll need these upgrades to win the legal (and illegal) street races. To the victor go the spoils: cash for new parts, pink slips for competitors' cars, and girlfriends (*in* pink slips) for...well, you know, all that fun stuff. And while the premiere installment of the series won't be online (something it will need if it wants to compete with Rockstar's *Midnight Club*), we've already heard the planned follow-up will.

GMA SAYS → That's right kids, an entire preview without reference to *The Fast and the Furious*. We do it because we care.

→ HOW HOT...







XB
PC
PS2
GC

RELEASE | JUNE

ST: ELITE FORCE II

SYSTEM PC PUBLISHER ACTIVISION DEVELOPER RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT

BEAM ME UP, TOO

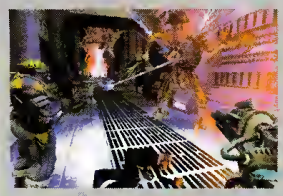
Love it or hate it, *Trek* has been the subject of more games than you can shake a *bat'leth* at. Some of them have been bad (*Star Trek: New Worlds*), while some have been good, such as *Voyager*-set FPS *Star Trek: Elite Force*, released in 2000. *Elite Force II*, due out this summer, should be every bit as good, if not better.

Also set in the *Voyager* timeline, *Elite Force II* begins where the series' last episode left off, and it even relates offscreen events, like the *Voyager* blasting free from a Borg cube. Then it's off to Starfleet Academy until you are assigned to the *Enterprise*'s away team.

Developer Ritual promises the single-player story will be significantly longer than the original's woefully short campaign, with even more stuff to shoot. Add new weapons, new alien races, and a significantly upgraded modification of the *Quake III: Team Arena* engine, and you've got a game that even non-Trekkies can dig.

GMA SAYS → Make it so!

→ HOW HOT...





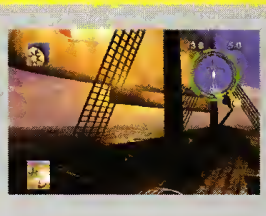
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

SYSTEM PC, XBOX PUBLISHER BETHESDA DEVELOPER BETHESDA

Sensibly refraining from matching scene for scene the Jerry Bruckheimer "blockbuster" on which *Pirates* is based, Bethesda is promising open-ended 17th century swashbuckling action in which players can hire swabbies, raid or trade with merchants, and seek out treasure on the open seas. Can they deliver? Well, they *did* publish and develop last year's *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*.

RELEASE | JUNE

→ HOW HOT...







RELEASE | AUGUST

SOUL CALIBUR 2

SYSTEM GC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER NAMCO DEVELOPER NAMCO

GEE...THE SOUL *WAS* STILL BURNING!

The long wait is finally over...somewhat. *Soul Calibur 2* has been released in Japan, and we've spent some quality time with all three versions. Frankly, you can't go wrong with any of them, but there are a few differences (graphics and controls) that might push you toward one edition or another.

Bonus characters are a matter of preference, but we're big fans of how Link looks and plays. Spawn has cooler moves, but he's stupid fast and a bit overpowered. Heihachi has a boring design—an old man, sans weapons. And Necrid is fast and possesses each character's best (some might argue cheapest) moves, not to mention he comes freshly plucked from the ugly tree. PS2 wins the best controller award, with the Xbox's S controller close behind; both beat out the stock Xbox and GameCube pads (the D-pads are fine, but the button layouts are awkward). Of course, real fighters use arcade sticks, so the point is moot. Graphically, Xbox is marginally better looking than GameCube, which is marginally better than PS2.

The preliminary verdict: *GMR* is very pleased. This is not a radical departure in any sense, but the original demands for more *Soul Calibur* have been met and delivered in full. Namco has set an August release date for the U.S. versions, but we understand if you can't wait that long.

GMR SAYS → We missed you old friend

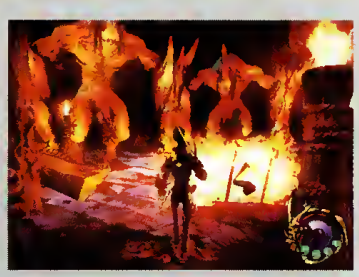
→HOW HOT...













RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS

SYSTEM XBOX PUBLISHER SEGA DEVELOPER FROM SOFTWARE

START SAVING YOUR PENNIES...NOW

This September, Sega ships one of the most lavishly illustrated RPG/action game hybrids we've had the pleasure to preview. *Otogi: Myth of Oemons* tasks recently resurrected Raiko with stopping a legion of demons straight out of some sake-addled nightmare. The game cobbles together Japanese mythology, over 25 levels, 30-plus weapons, and gorgeous graphics. How good is gorgeous? Just check the screens above, then swab thine tear-stained eyes.

Otogi will feature plenty of sword and spell slinging, but strategists can look forward to substantial RPG elements (collecting and customizing weapons and artifacts) and augmenting Raiko's skills, such as the ability to slice and dice everything from hell spawn to anything else. Ambient foliage, furniture, and even houses and hillsides can be decimated. Couple this with giant bosses, double jumps, dashing moves, and killer combos , and you'll forgive our euphoria.

Since its December release in Japan, import-savvy gamers have waxed poetic about *Otogi*'s flawless camera, *Dynasty Warriors*-meets-*Gun Valkyrie* gameplay, and engrossing, intuitive combat. Expect the same ebullience from Xbox owners everywhere this September.

GMR SAYS → *Otogi* could well drive your PS2-lovin' pals wild with envy.

→HOW HOT...

XB
PC
PS2
GC

XIII

SYSTEM PC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER UBI SOFT DEVELOPER UBI SOFT

Our buddies in Belgium, experts in waffles and, apparently, U.S. conspiracy theories, have crafted this slick FPS in which an amnesiac assassin must uncover his past and expose a global conspiracy using just about anything in the environment as a weapon. While this may not sound new, the aesthetic is. The visuals are based on the graphic novel of the same name—and it's looking damn good

RELEASE | AUGUST

→ HOW HOT...









RELEASE | FALL

BILLY HATCHER

SYSTEM GC | PUBLISHER SEGA | DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM

NAKA LAYS AN EGG

Forget the Twinkie defense. Should Yuji Naka, in a fit of professional jealousy, decide to knock off Shigeru Miyamoto (presumably with a giant, poisoned man-eating mushroom), there's not a jury on the planet that could convict him. Naka's alibi is airtight. He was on another planet when it happened. And *Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg* is proof.

Prosecution: "Mr. Naka, we know you did it. We found pieces of a giant man-eating mushroom in your house, a plan of Mr. Miyamoto's house (including all the secret areas), and a detailed description of how to avoid his deadly manservant, Mario."

Defense: "Judge, at this time, the defense would like to enter into evidence exhibit A—*Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg*, which clearly proves Mr. Naka is, in fact, on another planet, and was on another planet at the time of the murder.

Judge: "I'll allow it."

Defense: "You play the role of Billy, a young boy who dresses up in a chicken suit so as to better blend in with the eggs he rolls around. Yes, you roll eggs around, Your Honor. These psychedelic eggs grow fat as you feed them items from the world, and you may also throw said giant eggs at attacking hordes of blimp-like creatures, including a giant pirate whale boss. Eventually, the eggs hatch into equally bizarre creatures, which can then be strategically used to unlock new areas of the game, as their powers allow. Once again, Your Honor, I repeat—you wear a chicken suit."

Judge: "Mr. Naka, it's obvious to this court that planet Earth is a distant memory for you, and not only were you not here on the night of the murder, but should you ever return here, you would almost certainly be locked up for the protection of yourself and those around you. You are, therefore, acquitted."

GMR SAYS → Sega is always strongest when trying new things (*Super Monkey Ball* springs to mind), but it's a risk. Could *Billy* be just too weird?

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥

RELEASE | FALL

JAK II

SYSTEM PS2 | PUBLISHER SCEA | DEVELOPER NAUGHTY DOG STUDIOS

BIGGER AND BADDER

Changing times beget a maturing market, and so it goes for mascots. Eidos' leading lady spends her latest outing on the lam, and similarly, a leaner, meaner Jak begins his second adventure unlawfully incarcerated and out for revenge.

Apparently, the glowing portal at the end of *The Precursor Legacy* was a Rift Ring. Destination: 500 years forward. There, Jak is promptly picked up by the constabulary and spends two years as an unwilling guinea pig for Baron Praxis' experiments with Dark Eco.

Once free, Jak soon discovers that those tests have enabled him to transform into Dark Jak, a snarling badass with lightning-laced claws. The maturing of the franchise doesn't end there: *J&D*'s pastoral village has been replaced by a postapocalyptic shantytown, which serves as the hub for over 80 levels, and Jak can now hijack hovercraft from the area's hapless citizens.

Look forward to a hoverboard (with full trick set), as well as a rifle, replete with four modes and shooting ranges. The most intriguing part? Once acquired, these and other abilities are available at any time, which should contribute significantly to the game's goal of a seamless narrative.

GMR SAYS → Already well on its way to being a bigger, better, and deeper version of its precursor.

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥

RELEASE | FALL

FALLOUT: B.O.S.

SYSTEM PS2, XBOX | PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL | DEVELOPER INTERPLAY

HASTE MAKES WASTE

The *Fallout* franchise and its cute-as-a-button two-headed mascot have been well known to computer gamers for quite some time. *Fallout* and the subsequent *Fallout Tactics* were set in a postapocalyptic world full of dark, witty humor and a kind of corny 1950s sensibility. But beneath it all, they were hardcore RPGs akin to the *Baldur's Gate* series (although *Tactics* had more in common with squad-based shooters like *X-Com*).

Now comes *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* to Xbox and PS2: It's a third-person action-adventure game set firmly in the *Fallout* universe, but geared more toward the hack-n-slash (plus ranged-type shooting) gameplay console gamers seem more interested in, but with plenty of role-playing stats to flesh things out a bit. Think *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* or *Diablo*.

The story line involves a clan of warriors—the Brotherhood of Steel—who want to fold you into their ranks, a plot to turn what's left of humanity into mutants, and, of course, lots of post-nuclear-war wasteland yuckiness. But if it sticks to the *Fallout* formula, it should also be very funny. Or at least as funny as nuclear holocaust can be.

GMR SAYS → Nuclear winter is scary *and* cold. Somebody hold us.

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥

THE SUFFERING

SYSTEM PC, PS2, XBOX | PUBLISHER MIDWAY | DEVELOPER MIDWAY

Survival-horror fans should clear their October schedules. Midway is is taking its first stab at the genre. *The Suffering* is set in a decaying New England prison, brimming with foul-mouthed prisoners, rampaging demons, and a newly incarcerated con named Torque, who slowly loses control of his mind, affecting his surroundings. It's like *Oz* meets *Eternal Darkness*, as directed by John Carpenter.

RELEASE | OCTOBER

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥







RELEASE | OCTOBER

KYA: DARK LINEAGE

SYSTEM PS2 PUBLISHER ATARI DEVELOPER EDEN STUDIOS

THANK HEAVEN FOR THE LEETLE GIRLS...

Steering clear of *Jak II* and *Vexx*'s edgier platformy charms, Eden Studios is hard at work on the fall release of *Kya: Dark Lineage*, a psychedelic romp that's more *Arzach* than *Fritz the Cat*.

The game plunks the titular star, her brother, and the player into an enchanted world where the peace-loving Nativs have been forcibly transmuted into Wolfen, a warmongering race of lupine lowlifes. Kya's sudden arrival is no coincidence; utilizing stealth, feet, fists, and magic, she must make her way across nine sprawling levels, harness her magical destiny, liberate the Nativ race, and—oh yes—rescue her brother.

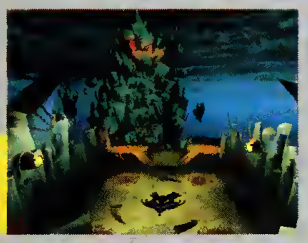
Gender defenders will be pleased to see a female lead who breaks the mold of the chesty warrior femme fatale. But as a potential mascot, Kya lacks a certain *je nais cest crois*; all bare midriff and flared jeans, this leading lass currently seems a bit too hip and overdesigned for our liking.

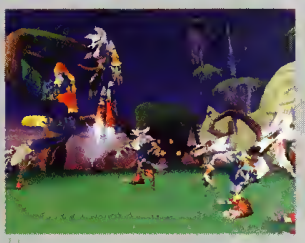
In addition to the usual punch and kickery, Kya's hair clip serves as an upgradable boomerang, and newly liberated Nativs promptly head home and set up shops where Kya can purchase new abilities and upgrades. More intriguing, a recent demonstration saw her stealing, taming, and mounting wild animals and enemies. Not all of the action takes place on foot or hoof; the limber lass also uses ambient wind currents to soar and swoop miles high, enabling players to take in the majestically myriad landscape below.

GMR SAYS → Only time will tell if Kya's Francofied charms prove catchy or cloying.

→ HOW HOT...







RELEASE | OCTOBER

T.M.N.T.

SYSTEM GBA, GC, PC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER KONAMI DEVELOPER KONAMI

UNFLUSHABLE!

Justice once again comes served on the half shell as Konami revives the once ultrahot *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* license, and not a moment too soon for an all-new flurry of frenzied fans.

For those who happened to be asleep or dead during the 1980s, the Turtles were a phenomenon of sorts, brought to life by comic-book creators Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. The comic begat an animated TV show, which begat an endless toy line, which begat four live-action movies, which begat a slew of arcade and console-based games. This new adventure pits weapon-wielding reptiles Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo, and Michelangelo against their evil ninja nemesis, Shredder.

Konami hasn't shown any version of the *Turtles* game (it'll be out for all platforms, plus PCs), but promises 3D brawling in either single-player Story mode or a multiplayer Versus mode, with six stages and 35 separate levels. Each turtle will have his own special fighting moves and can, in conjunction with his teammates, execute tag-team attacks.

Additionally, special scrolls found during gameplay will unlock various secrets and allow you to learn new techniques. Players can expect guest appearances by Splinter, the Turtles' rodent sensei, as well as bit players like reporter April O'Neal, whacked-out hockey hooligan Casey Jones, and scientist Baxter Stockman.

GMR SAYS → Fond memories of arcade classics aside until we get some hands-on time with the game, we'll be taking the cautious approach...

→ HOW HOT...







BLOWOUT

→ HOW HOT...

SYSTEM PC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER MAJESCO DEVELOPER FROM

Pay heed when a shooter sets out to shatter *Contra*'s steel crown. In Majesco's *BlowOut*, it's space commandos versus aliens, courtesy of creature designer Yasushi Nirasawa (*Soul Calibur*, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*). Screens reveal 360 degrees of 2D death dealing and dimly lit spaces. Side-scrolling skills gone soft? Overcompensate with the built-in level editor. Sounds good to us.

RELEASE | FALL









PS2









FISTS OF FURY

TIGERS DO INDEED CROUCH, AND DRAGONS ARE OBVIOUSLY ALWAYS HIDDEN—THAT'S WHY NO ONE EVER SEES ONE

"Please God, please don't let them %#$& this up," is what we're thinking as we're ushered into the lobby of Ubi Soft's trendy San Francisco offices for an exclusive first look and hands-on with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. It's a familiar prayer for game-mag editors, who spend more time than desirable (or even healthy) with some of the most misguided, half-assed movie-licensed games in the known universe—the most recent loaf of cosmic poop being *Minority Report*. The good news is that as of late, there have also been some notable successes, not the least of which is Electronic Arts' *LOTR: The Two Towers*, which is as good a jumping off point as any for describing *Crouching Tiger*'s basic feel.

As in *Two Towers*, any notions of deep storytelling, love-story rubbish, or complex character and plot development are kicked in the nuts and thrown clean out the window (almost certainly landing in a strategically placed hay wagon) in favor of constant action. This is no bad thing. With an epic movie like *CTHD*, things could easily get complicated if the development team gets too ambitious. Genki, erstwhile journeyman developer of *Phantom Crash*, *Tokyo Highway Battle*, and, uh, *Super Magnetic Niu-Niu*, is keeping it simple, and Ubi Soft, which is bankrolling the game, is happy with that approach—especially with *Two Towers* sitting pretty on the sales charts.

FIGHT!

GMR's exclusive hands-on demo reveals a structure that adheres closely to the movie's most action-oriented scenes, but Genki has obviously had to extend things quite a bit for the sake of the game (if you watch the movie, the fight scenes are short and involve very few protagonists). You eventually get to play as four of the film's characters: Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), the thief Jen Yu (Ziyi Zhang), and her lover, Lo (Chen Chang). The action kicks off, literally, with Jen trying to escape from the palace with the stolen Green Destiny sword. At this stage, the environments are unfinished and heavily reminiscent of *Tenchu*—not overly detailed, but enough to get the job done. Almost immediately, you must take down three guards, and there's some latitude in how you do it. The Square and Triangle buttons unleash weapon attacks, with the X and O buttons reserved for hand-to-hand combat.

PS2





→ Battles often feature three or more enemies, although most are fairly easy to dispatch at this early stage. Well, unless you're fighting Jade Fox (right), who's featured as the game's principle villain. She's an end-of-level boss and the end-of-game boss. The CGI (below) will almost certainly be supplemented by film clips.



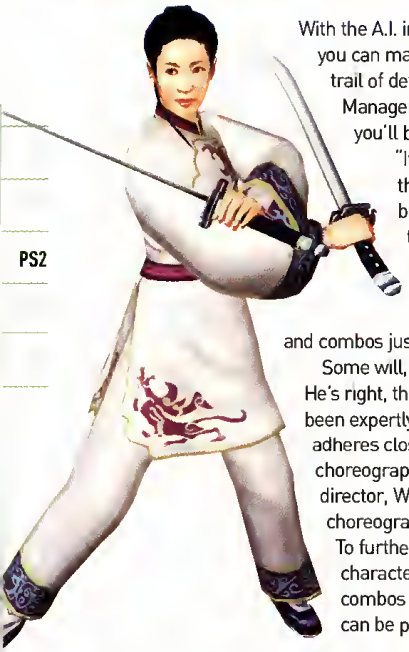






→ "OK, I'm throwing the peanut...now!" Yu Shu Lien (left) teaches a foe how to catch one in the teeth, while Li Mu Bai (right) fights with his expert weapon: the sword. Most fights that appeared in the movie appear in the game, but Genki has added much more action to keep things moving and provide for those 90 levels!





PS2

With the A.I. in a fairly rudimentary state, you can mash all you want and leave a trail of defeated foes, but Content Manager Charles Harribey claims you'll be missing out if you do.

"It's not impossible to get through a level by mashing the buttons," he concedes, "but we think you're going to want to use more of your moves. We think people will want to try to pull off the special moves and combos just to see them."

Some will, we figure, but some won't. He's right, though—the characters have been expertly animated, and the fighting adheres closely to the graceful kung fu choreography of the movie's famous fight director, Woo-Ping Yuen (he also choreographed the fights in *The Matrix*). To further deepen the fighting, each character has a set of signature combos and weapons. New moves can be picked up as you advance and, thanks to an experience-point system, the more ass-kicking you do, the more kick-ass your character becomes. Again, it's not essential to worry about upgrading your skills, but if you want to get more out of the experience, you can. Hopefully, opponents in the final version will ramp up in difficulty and force you to learn enough kung fu to continue—although Ubi Soft, if not Genki, seems anxious to make *Crouching Tiger* an accessible experience for all.

FLY!

Undoubtedly, you'll have the most fun while making your way through each of the 90-plus levels (yes, 90, but more on that in a moment) by leaping around on rooftops while your enemies blunder below. *GMR* spent so much time in the air that Harribey, who was watching in dismay, had to encourage us to come down to earth and play fair (admittedly, we weren't really getting anywhere with it). Some areas require frequent Zen running (running straight up walls); others less so. But jumping, like combat, can be upgraded, and finding power-ups will grant you access to new areas that reveal health, weapons, and other assorted goodies.

OK, so, 90 levels. Well, the finished game will probably have more like 80, but the point is that *Crouching Tiger* will be no pushover. Each of the three main characters (Li Mu Bai, Yu Shu Lien, and Jen Yu) see action in three locations, with each location containing between eight and 10 sublevels with various minor objectives. There's some variety here in gameplay terms, too; Jen's second level is a flashback to her time in the desert with the bandit Lo (also known as Dark Cloud) and requires more exploration than combat as she seeks to retrieve her comb. Yes, a comb. Watch the movie again.

Once you've completed Jen's missions, you pick up the story as Yu Shu Lien halfway through Jen's first level in the palace. Finish with Yu's levels, and you then pick up as Li Mu Bai, beginning with his duel with Jade Fox and Jen in the Golden Hills area. Confused? You will be.

We're not sure if we're supposed to reveal this, but once you've finished the game, there's

→You can upgrade your skills and build a fighting style that favors either weapons or hand-to-hand combat. Meanwhile, dramatic camera angles (that the player can tweak) help to style the action.

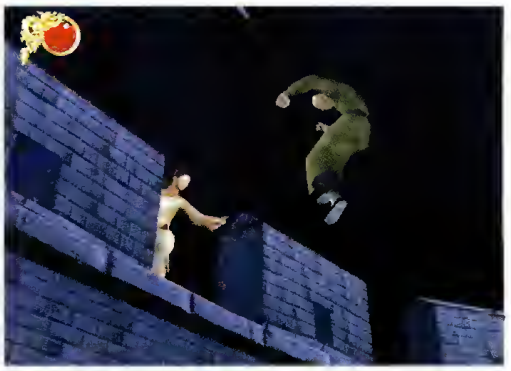




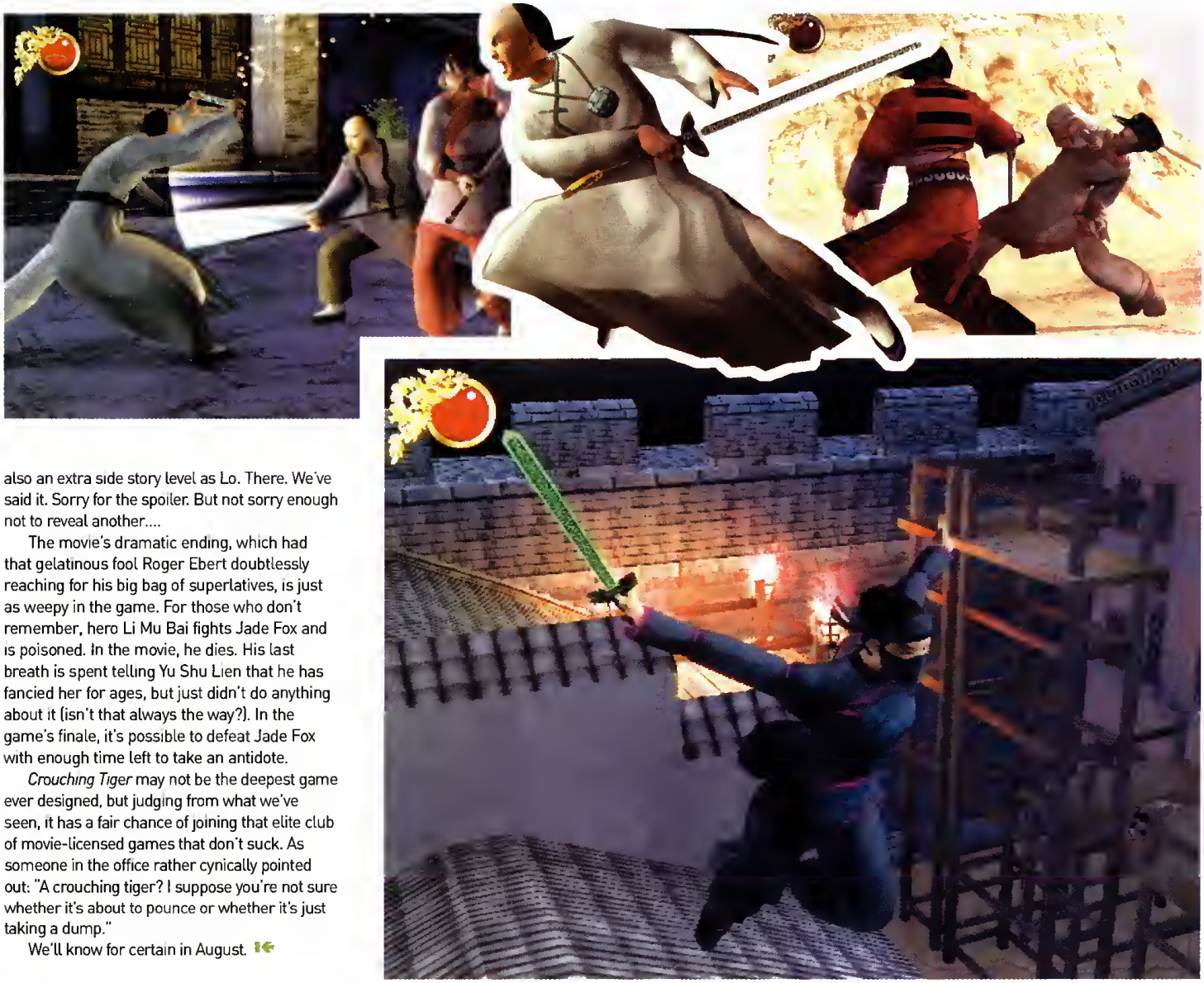








↗ You can pretty much go anywhere in the environments; if you can see it, you can probably find a way to get to it. Many of game's hidden items and power-ups are tucked away on rooftops or in secret areas that are only accessible by using your double-jump or similar moves.



also an extra side story level as Lo. There. We've said it. Sorry for the spoiler. But not sorry enough not to reveal another....

The movie's dramatic ending, which had that gelatinous fool Roger Ebert doubtlessly reaching for his big bag of superlatives, is just as weepy in the game. For those who don't remember, hero Li Mu Bai fights Jade Fox and is poisoned. In the movie, he dies. His last breath is spent telling Yu Shu Lien that he has fancied her for ages, but just didn't do anything about it (isn't that always the way?). In the game's finale, it's possible to defeat Jade Fox with enough time left to take an antidote.

Crouching Tiger may not be the deepest game ever designed, but judging from what we've seen, it has a fair chance of joining that elite club of movie-licensed games that don't suck. As someone in the office rather cynically pointed out: "A crouching tiger? I suppose you're not sure whether it's about to pounce or whether it's just taking a dump."

We'll know for certain in August.

PS2

WIRELESS

THOSE COOL STUNTS FROM THE MOVIE ARE HERE (MINUS THE WIRES)





Where the movie literally took off is where you can, too, thanks to Genki's implementation of the wall-running and gliding moves. It's not the first time we've seen this in a videogame—Sega's *Shinobi* update last year did it first—but even at this reasonably early stage, it's well implemented and adds an extra dimension to the battles. You can attack your foes from the rooftops or evade them if things get too risky. Genki even re-created the ludicrously showy "drill" in which you bounce off a wall *Mario*-style, then spin through the air and land on someone's head.



ZEN AND THE ART OF ONLINE GAMING

WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW. PLUS: THE FOUR FUTURE GAMES THAT WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE IN THE YEAR AHEAD. A GMA SPECIAL REPORT

039 : INTRODUCTION / ASHERON'S CALL 2
040 : SOCOM / THE SIMS ONLINE
041 : PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
042 : MECHASSAULT
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047 : WORLD OF WARCRAFT
056 : STAR WARS GALAXIES
053 : TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE
056 : FINAL FANTASY XI

FEAR AND LOADING: SEANBABY REPORTS ON WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE TO BE ONLINE NOW

When Nintendo unveiled the Power Pad peripheral, it hoped to usher in a new age of fitness for videogamers. That didn't happen. And when it unveiled R.O.B., the Robot Operated Buddy, it hoped to bring swift robot death to our children for reasons no human will understand. That also didn't happen...yet. And when videogames went online, it was meant to bring funtastic worlds of connectivity and possibility to our videogames. From my time online, this isn't working out very well, either.

GMR asked me to try out online gaming for all the major platforms and to find out why the majority of gamers don't seem to care that their PlayStations can make phone calls. I should let you know before I begin that I am not an online gaming expert. Before this, the closest I ever came to an online game was playing a MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) for 20 minutes in college; my Lizard Warrior was promptly killed by city mice. Obviously, as someone who can lead a Lizard Warrior into a losing fight against city mice, I'm not going to teach you advanced strategies for getting your flamethrowing hat to be even more magical in *EverQuest*. This feature will document the humbling experiences a newcomer to the world of online gaming goes through, ease your doubts, and most likely reaffirm those darkest suspicions you've had about online communities.

SEAN WHO?

Only some blue-haired guy we found wandering the streets of San Francisco and offered a writing gig to (aspiring writers take note: dyeing your hair equals employment). Truthfully, Seanbaby has contributed to the likes of *The Wave* and *GMR*'s sister mag *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. He also runs his own website; go check out www.seanbaby.com (sorry kids, grownups only). We recommend his article on the 20 Worst Nintendo Games of All Time. Highly.



PC SEANBABY ANSWERS THE CALL...THEN PROMPTLY HANGS UP

ASHERON'S CALL 2





I'D RATHER GET PIECES OF MY FAMILY IN THE MAIL THAN FIGHT ANOTHER GODDAMN CREATURE







GETTING STARTED

It took me about 20 minutes to get helplessly lost in the vast world of really, really empty fields that make up this game. On the rare occasion that my aimless jogging led me to something I could fight, I was lucky if I could so much as scratch it before it flayed every bit of my character's skin off. This game is not rewarding to beginners. In fact, aside from squirting poisonous tentacles out of the CD drive, this game could not have done more to make me want to quit playing it. I've been assured by the box and instruction manual that my character will one day play a pivotal role in triggering dynamic world-shaking events in a reactive fantasy landscape, but I strongly disagree. If evil lunatics kidnapped my family and demanded I play this game as ransom, I'd rather get pieces of them in the mail than fight another goddamn *Asheron's Call 2* creature.

BETTER ONLINE?

In offline fantasy games, townspeople are pretty one-dimensional. They stand in the same spot through their entire virtual lives, shouting at any lithesome preteen Elf adventurer who approaches them that they dare not go into the cave beyond the great whatever. I thought actual living townspeople would add the one thing dragon slaying really needs: compelling conversation. I was wrong. After five uninteresting minutes of Doome_Knight3 and DrowMage92 barking at each other in unpunctuated Olde English to nuzzle each other's crotches, I was thinking back fondly to the days of the brain-damaged town guard who could only say these words: "WELCOME TO THE CITY OF FROSTDEWFORESTFALL!"

COMMUNITY

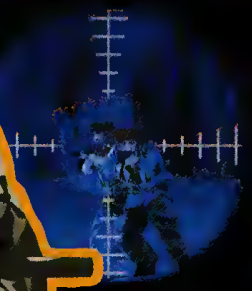
Most people I ran into weren't interested in talking to a beginner, despite the fact that I was playing as a female Tumerok who, by reptile-thing standards, seemed to be very attractive. Through a series of miracles, I finally ran into a player who didn't just jog past me, and she told me a story about her new battle-ax that was a gift from a male admirer. But things got tense when, in an effort to discover if she was really a female, I began quizzing her "woman to woman" about female reproductive organs and she soon left. What does this prove? Well, I'd say it proves this: Online gamers, the chances are good that the hot Orc girl you're seducing with magical axes is not only a man, but a man who smells as much like armpit and Doritos as you.

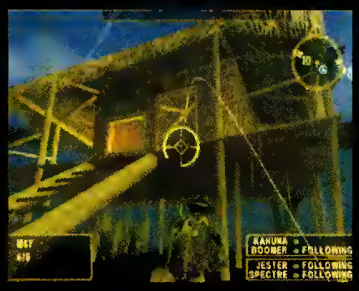
PLAYSTATION 2

HUNTING DOWN AMERICA'S DUMBEST KIDS...ONE BY ONE



SOCOM







GIVEN AN OPTION, I VOTE IN FAVOR OF "BLOOD VIOLENCE" EVERY TIME

GETTING STARTED

Each time you go online, *SOCOM* forces you to agree to its lengthy terms of service indicating that you are OK with, among other atrocities, "Blood Violence." At first, this was just an annoying formality, since I figured my being OK with these things was implied when I bought a game about shooting Navy SEALs in the brain with high-powered rifles. However, after about 20 online games, it became clear that, when given an option, I vote in favor of "Blood Violence" every single time. I'm not saying *SOCOM* made me into a monster, but it does remind me that I am one each and every time I turn it on.

BETTER ONLINE?

In the single-player game, it's not unusual to spatter the head of a terrorist all over his friend's shirt and elicit no reaction. Even the worst player you run into online will offer a more exciting challenge than that. However, the disadvantage to playing online is that if someone dies early in the match, it can be a long wait until another game starts. If this happens to you, bring a book. If it happens to other people online...well, I've found that they like to fill their boredom with long, drawn-out descriptions of the things my mom likes to do in a bed full of frat boys. To be honest, I have no idea if they're right or not, but it doesn't seem like a very Navy SEALs type of attitude.

COMMUNITY

Fifteen or 20 years ago, the stupid started breeding at an incredible rate. For every child given a healthy breakfast and sent to school by loving parents, there are at least 10 raised in a trailer by their 14-year-old mother. A lot of these children grew up to enjoy *SOCOM*, and in every game, each one appoints himself squad leader. Firefights are filled with orders no one can possibly follow, like "Go left!" or "Over there—get them!" This usually degenerates into swearing matches so retarded and garbled that it's hard to tell whether they're screaming in anger or simply being electrocuted by a malfunctioning headset. One hopes it's both.





THE SIMS ONLINE

TAKING OVER THE SIMS ONLINE WORLD IN SIX EASY STEPS

***The Sims Online* offers an opportunity to create a new virtual life in a virtual world that, according to sales statistics, virtually no one is interested in. During my time with the game, I decided I would be a world-conqueror, learning to live and love while slowly closing my iron fist around the throat of pathetic human livestock.**

STEP 1: VILLAINOUS LAIR

Although your new home will be the staging area for untold terrors, it should appear to be an innocent structure—or, if possible, it should not be seen at all. In an attempt to camouflage my Sim's house, I decoratively painted it so that, to my neighbors, it looked like a harmless fleet of low-flying hot-air balloons. Since no one ever stopped by, I must assume my ploy was successful.

STEP 2: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Before I could be a mad scientist, I needed to be mad. So, I walked my Sim into a corner and surrounded him with impenetrable walls covered in polka-dotted wallpaper. Next, I gave him a teddy bear and eight pictures of clowns that would haunt him with their unsleeping stares. I left him in there for several days, occasionally forcing him to dance or shake his fist at one of the clowns. He held up pretty well for a little while, but when I stole his teddy bear and put it in its own clown-monitored holding cell, he lost his mind and started screaming about pictures of furniture.

STEP 3: FUTURISTIC DEVICES

Once my Sim wet himself and broke down in tears, I was satisfied that the torture and hunger had driven him as mad as he was going to get. I tore down a wall and let him wander into his laboratory to invent something that could drill to the center of the Sim Earth or control Sim minds from space. Instead, he alternated his time between





NEED A SNIPER+1? DON'T WORRY, I'VE GOT AT LEAST 500 OF 'EM...





screaming about cheeseburgers and, again, peeing on himself.

STEP 4: A MASTERFUL DISGUISE

I was hoping for a mad scientist bent on taking over the world. I realized a mad incontinent would have to do. But no one was going to take this conqueror seriously if he was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and surf shorts. He needed a disguise. After a sad good bye to his toaster oven, he was forced to sell back everything he owned to get the money for a costume trunk. But when I demanded he put on the only available costume—that of a vaudeville entertainer—he broke into tears and demanded a shower. So, I guess the Sim world's neck will be stomped on by the boot of a mad scientist who doesn't know science, is covered in his own filth, and dresses like a Waikiki-based private detective.

STEP 5: HENCHMAN RECRUITMENT

I sent my Sim to the only nearby house with other Sim players in it. Never before had I, or my computerized double, seen so many people so happy about nothing. Six of them were playing a game where they pressed a button on a device that rolled dice until they all rolled a one. At least three of them commented on how fun it was. My little world-dominator, disgusted by their imbecilic foolishness, carefully mentioned to a half-naked woman that he was planning an atomic zombie-man takeover of the world. She replied "lol" and proceeded to passionately kiss him. This was sort of unexpected, but as my Sim was still very recently out of prison, I wasn't going to get between him and this whirlwind romance.

STEP 6: INITIATE OPERATION: DOMINATION

From what I—the nonvirtual me—know about females, a real woman would have very little interest in playing the part of a slutty, bikini-wearing virtual woman who jumps on any urine-covered maniac threatening to destroy her planet. Which meant that this woman kissing my Sim was most likely being controlled by a guy. But before I could politely end what, let's face it, was really two dudes pretending to make out over the Internet, my Sim collapsed from exhaustion. At that point, he flatly ignored all of my demands, and the only contribution he made to taking over this glorified chat room of a game being played by eight people was to wake up for a minute and pee on his new girlfriend's floor.



GAMECUBE

→ PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

GETTING STARTED

This game is set in the future, and as such, it simulates an apocalyptic cyberscape in which we're at the mercy of evil computers. They maintain this control via an online service that "accidentally" destroys players' characters every now and then. There's also a well-known glitch that dissolves all of your character's items. This never happened to me, but even if it had, that would just mean I'd have had the fun of killing 400,000 giant rabbits all over again, while finding those eight lightsabers that were worse than the one I started with.

BETTER ONLINE?

Like all games in which adding another plus number to your Magician Cane is just three hours of monster-killing away, *PSO* is addictive. However, since the keyboard controller isn't available in the United States and there's no way to type out conversations with the slow-ass onscreen typewriter while you're being torn apart by space bees, I don't see the point of this game being online. There is a hotkey system that can pop up communicative smiley-face bubbles you've designed, but since I never found any facial expressions that were better than the Attack button at getting the bees off me, these didn't seem that useful. Going online with this game only seemed to increase the chance that when a monster finally does drop a Frisbee +4, Alara the Moon Cyborg will probably get to it before I do.

COMMUNITY

Unless I was trading weapons, I didn't run into a lot of social interaction in *PSO*. Once you and the other wizards select a mission, you all walk through the level and kill anything you meet. You'll occasionally run into locked doors or force fields, but very few of these obstacles require discussion. The game doesn't feature complicated place-eagle-crest-in-eagle-crest-hole-style adventure puzzles. If a door is locked and the switch to open it isn't four inches away, check again—you're probably not playing *Phantasy Star Online*. Don't expect to meet your future online gaming wife during your party's how-do-we-lower-the-force-field brainstorming meeting. Which, considering the behavior I've seen and heard in my time online, is probably for the best.

THERE'S ALSO A WELL KNOWN GLITCH THAT DISSOLVES ALL OF YOUR CHARACTER'S ITEMS





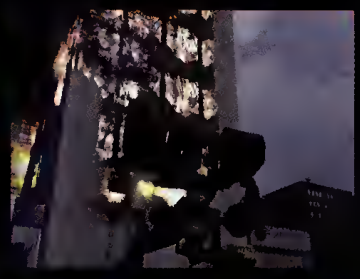




XBOX WHINY BAATS LAUNCHING A MECHANIZED ASSAULT...ON MY EARS













MECHASSAULT

GETTING STARTED

Starting a game of *MechAssault* with other Xbox Live players doesn't take long, and after you go through it about ten times, you'll learn to look at players' usernames to determine how obnoxious they will be. For example, if someone's name is spelled wrong and ends in the number 69, you're probably going to hear some comments about numerous sexual depravities. This may excite you, and then again, it may not. By the way, *MechAssault* offers a choice of microphone filters, in case you don't think your real voice sounds enough like a robot pilot from the future. I have to say, though, that these fake voices don't usually fool anybody. Because no matter how deep your voice is, when you're being lasered from all sides and whining about how you're being unfairly ganged up on, we're all almost positive you're not the real Darth Vader.

BETTER ONLINE?

Playing through the offline *MechAssault* missions is like trying to come up with exciting new ways to date a cantaloupe. Put it in the microwave, draw a face on it...there's a limited number of times a relationship with the same fruit is going to make you happy. Just like there's only so many damn times you can walk down a canyon and fight the same robots. Online matches offer variety, but most of the people I ran into were so ridiculously good at this game that I found it saved everyone time if I just walked over and put my robot's mouth directly onto their rocket spout.

COMMUNITY

I found that a majority of the people playing the game are pretty polite until they blow up your mech and make mocking political slurs about the gender of people you most likely have sex with. Luckily, a Southern 12-year-old's accent disguised by an electronic helium filter makes a lot of the trash-talking unintelligible. And, despite the mostly mean things they had to say, I think the online *MechAssault* community really did have a nice time blowing the head off my giant robot when my dumb ass couldn't drive it out of a lava-filled lake.

THERE'S ONLY SO MANY TIMES YOU CAN WALK DOWN A CANYON AND FIGHT THE SAME ROBOTS







GET YOUR GAME ON...LINE

THE FIST HAS THE SKINNY ON HOW TO GET HOOKED UP

So how 'bout it? Does the prospect of spending your Saturday evenings yelling at 15-year-old punks to assume flanking positions sound exciting enough to take the network plunge? Before you dive in, make sure you know how to swim...

PC

Back in the old days, connecting your PC to a network required several technical degrees and a whole lot of patience. Thanks to the marvels of modern technology, the process has been simplified enough that anyone with a screwdriver and 15 minutes can do it.

Depending on your connection, you'll need either a 56K modem or a network interface card (NIC). Any new computer worth its salt should have both already installed, and if yours doesn't, it's probably too old to run games, anyway. Just plug the cable into the proper outlet, and you're set.



GAMES: *Battlefield 1942, Freelancer, Star Wars Galaxies*

GAMECUBE

Getting your GameCube online is easy; actually finding games to play is the tough part. Nintendo sells two flavors of adapters: 56K and broadband. Both retail for about $40, but because Nintendo isn't really pushing the whole online thing right now, they might be hard to find. Try your local game shop or go to the Web and order directly from Nintendo.

Remove the Serial Port 1 cover from the bottom of your Cube, drop in your adapter, plug in the appropriate cable, and get ready for endless hours of *Phantasy Star Online*, the only game available.



GAME: *Phantasy Star Online*

PLAYSTATION 2

Sony's network solution is a bit more consumer friendly than Nintendo's. Both 56K and broadband options are supported in the same $40 unit, and after an initial period of high demand, the Network Adaptor can now be found at most major electronics retailers (Best Buy, Circuit City, Target) and specialty game stores.

Pry off the expansion-bay cover on the back of your PS2 and notice the small slot on the top of the bay (never mind the empty space, that's where you'll put the upcoming hard drive). Stick the modem in the slot, tighten the screws, plug in your Cat5 cable or phone cord, and turn on your PS2. Sony lacks an Xbox Live–like network, so all network connections are made inside the game. Plug any extra devices, like a keyboard or mic, into the USB port.



GAMES: *Twisted Metal Black, SOCOM, Madden*

XBOX

When Microsoft first announced the Xbox, it said the system would be capable of going online out of the box. Not quite—you'll still need to march down to your local merchant to buy the $50 Xbox Live Starter Kit, which includes one year of service, along with the practically mandatory voice-modifying microphone headset. After this purchase, though, it's clear sailing.

Just plug your cables into the jack on the back of your Xbox, install the Live setup disk, pick a screen name (the one you'll use for all games on Live), and join the fracas. Minors might want to note that they'll need a credit card to sign up, so start sucking up to the folks right away. Since the Xbox is a broadband-only machine, you'll need to be on a network.



GAMES: *Mech Assault, Sega Sports, Capcom vs. SNK 2*

NETWORKING 101

Congratulations, D3m0N-slayer362, you've joined the growing ranks of online gamers. But wait, you've got more than one system! And wait again, you still have a PC that needs to be connected for downloading stuff! And wait one last time, each system is in a different room, connected to a different television! It's time to network.

We've put together a flow chart of what an ideal gaming network (let's call it a GAN) looks like, assuming you have a PC and each of the current consoles.

The first thing you need, aside from a DSL or cable ISP, is a broadband modem. These are usually supplied by the ISP when you sign up for service but can be purchased separately if necessary.

The next piece of equipment is absolutely vital: a router. Without it, you can't share a connection among multiple machines. Get one with room for at least four connections (LinkSys is a good brand), then plug the Cat5 cable coming from the broadband modem into the incoming port on the back of the router. You can configure most routers through your PC's Web browser.

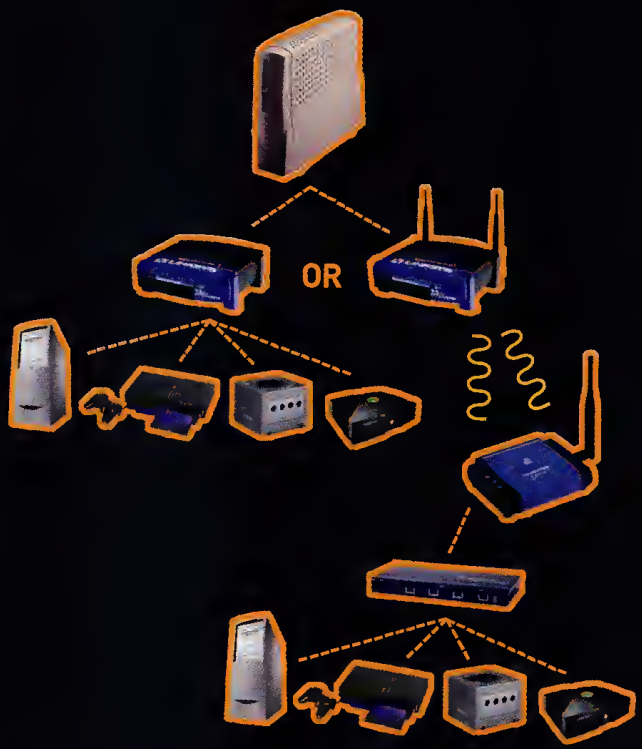
With your router set up, it's time to add your machines. Use the Cat5 to connect your PC, PS2, Xbox, and GameCube to the ports on the back of the router. Make sure the green lights are lit and you've got active connections.

But what if each component is in a different room? You could knock down some walls...or you could get rid of the cables completely and build a wireless network. It's more expensive, but it's much more convenient (and tidy). Same layout, but:

- Replace the standard router with a wireless one. (Linksys WRT54G)
- Buy a wireless bridge (Linksys WET11) and connect it to a switch.
- Connect your machines to the switch.

BEHOLD, THE GMR GAN

Wired option goes down to the left, wireless down to the right



OH YEAH, THE BILL...

GC broadband/modem	$40
PS2 Network Adaptor	$40
PCI network card	$15
Xbox Live Starter Kit	$50
Wired router	$60
Cat5 cable (7 ft.)	$15
Wireless router	$99
Wireless PCI card	$60
Wireless bridge	$99
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→ Anyone who thinks massively multiplayer equals massively bloody ugly had better think again—*World of Warcraft* boasts a quality of art and animation rarely seen on the PC. All the screens on the following pages were taken from the same version *GMR* played, and we've been assured the game will run on a lowly 800MHz GeForce 2 setup....



FUTURE GAMES No. 1

WORLD OF WARCRAFT PC

BLIZZARD'S CLASSIC ATS SERIES GOES MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER RPG...

Although massively multiplayer role-playing games (often referred to as MMORPGs) are potentially one of the most exciting developments in gaming, chances are you've resisted the temptation to dive in. That's hardly surprising. After all, which would you rather do—drive cool jeeps and tanks around the lush ringworld of *Halo*, or spend a few months camping, farming, and grinding in the barren expanses of Norrath? EverCrack's addictive properties are undisputed, but let's face facts: It looks horrible. And nothing short of *EverQuest 2* will change that.

That said, what are the chances that *World of WarCraft*—Blizzard's first MMORPG—will change your mind? If our exclusive playtest of the alpha version is anything to go by...the chances are good. *GMR* found an online world so rich, beautiful, and loaded with detail, you won't just want to visit the rolling hills of Azeroth—you'll want to kick in your job, dump your girlfriend, pack your bags, and move there. Which, for a monthly fee "in line with others' but better value," is exactly what Blizzard is offering.

"*World of WarCraft* is an amalgamation of the art, the sound, the flavor, and the story of (the *WarCraft*) universe," explains Blizzard cofounder Allan Adham. "It's taking what others have done, learning from that, taking it to the next level, and applying the Blizzard polish and production, from the pacing of combat to our quest system, and from the design of skills and abilities to our approach to PVP [player versus player]."

Most crucially, perhaps, *WOW* relies heavily upon story and narrative to gel the world's many elements—something previous MMORPGs have failed to do well. The game's quest system (see page 49) will organically unravel the world and its story in a completely different way for each race/class character combination. And, through some gradual pacing, Blizzard hopes to draw in not only hardcore *WarCraft* and MMORPG fans, but also complete newcomers when *WOW* ships sometime next year.

"We're looking at the game like three big legs on a stool," says Adham. "There's PVP, PVE [player versus environment], and what we're calling World as Toy." PVP and PVE will ring familiar to MMORPG players (see sidebars), but it's World as Toy that's perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this game's social infrastructure: the game simply functioning as a playground that's fun to hang out in.

Your typical *WOW* day might go something like this: You talk to people, make friends, group with others, go on quests, kill creatures, hone skills, advertise your services (through chat channels), buy things, sell things, go fishing or swimming, enter PVP arenas...or simply sit on your fat Dwarven ass in a tavern, gambling away your gold. Some activities, like quests, will be requirements for leveling up and progressing through the game. Some, like learning a foreign language or building furniture or crafting leather goods, won't—but they'll deepen your connection to the world and the players around you.

Translating one of the world's most popular real-time strategy games into a vast 3D world that can accommodate thousands of players simultaneously is, to put it mildly, challenging. Blizzard's reputation may be untarnished in the world of RTS games, but critics will quickly point out that it has never developed an MMORPG—a process that is, in the words of *Ultima Online* creator Richard Garriot, "a nightmare far, far deeper than you can imagine."

But when you consider *World of WarCraft*'s budget (including all the worldwide servers for hosting the game) is hovering somewhere around $40-$50 million, and that 60 people have already been working on the project for three years, it's a little easier to have faith.

Relax. This is Blizzard we're talking about.







→ While you'll spend a lot of your time fighting the game's 1,000-plus creatures, it's the PVP combat the designers have been most reticent to discuss. Until now, that is. *GMR* can reveal that *World of Warcraft* will only feature consensual PVP combat in designated areas such as this coliseum (above). See page 48.









→ The confirmed inclusion of the Night Elves won't surprise many, but it's sure to delight fans—they were arguably *WarCraft III*'s most popular race. The Night Elves are the oldest race in the *Warcraft* universe and live for around 10,000 years, effectively making them immortal. Mysterious, druidic, and more ethereal in nature than other races, they are nocturnal savages whose stories and race/class abilities are closely related to the earth and nature. They dwell in Kalimdor—an area revealed but not fully explored in *WarCraft III*—and *GMR* was particularly impressed by the architecture, which is a bizarre fusion of Norse Viking and Japanese Zen. Night Elves are damn cool.

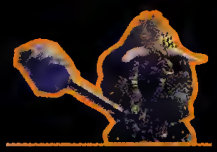
PC

THE RACES

IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE... WHO WILL YOU BE?

World of WarCraft currently has five playable races—Orcs, Humans, Tauren, Dwarves, and Night Elves—and more may be announced. Each class—including warriors, mages, druids, shamen, and hunters—has male and female characters. A character's class determines his or her social standing within a race, and each comes with his or her own unique abilities. For example, druids can shapeshift, mages are the most powerful casters, and hunters (at higher levels, at least) can tame any of the world's 1,000 animals to be their sidekick pet. Wanna take a giant grizzly bear along with you into a PVP arena? Uh, who wouldn't?











5 REASONS TO BE WOWED

A GOOD

1. IT'S HUGE!

A character's race and class determine the area in which you'll start the game. Players can explore two large land masses: Azeroth to the east (home to Alliance, residence of Humans and Dwarves), and Kalimdor across the seas to the west (home of the Horde, where Orcs and Tauren live with the Night Elves). It pretty much goes without saying the *WOW* world is huge. It would feasibly take between three and four hours to walk in a straight line from one side of it to the other. At one point, you'd have to hop on a boat, too, as the game will feature game-controlled vessels (including a *WarCraft* favorite, Zeppelins) to take you across large stretches of land or sea. Interestingly, Humans and Orcs can ride horses and wolves (right) respectively once they've reached a particular level.



2. PVP!

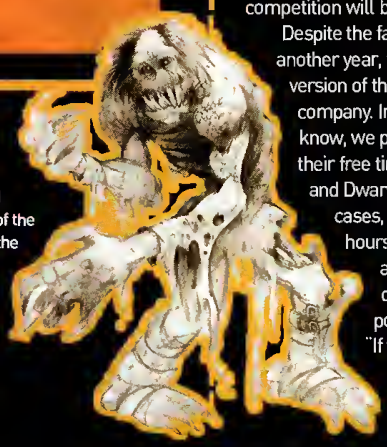
Until now, the details regarding player versus player (PVP) combat has been kept tightly under wraps—and for good reason. PVP is among the most controversial aspects of MMORPGs. Some players wish PVP potential played a big role in all parts of the world; others prefer to see it relegated to specific sections. *World of WarCraft* keeps around 90 percent of its world benign and reserves special areas for consensual PVP combat. Imagine a coliseum in which 30 or 40 players are hammering the bejesus out of each other. "We think these areas will become somewhat crowded, especially in the evenings," says Adham. He also hints that lovers of first-person-style games will be most at home here (it's possible to play the game proper in first-person mode).







→ Black Rock Spire is a giant, underground city/dungeon inside a volcano that connects the land masses of Azeroth and Khaz Modan—and it's one of the only ways to pass between the two. According to Blizzard, it's one of the world's nastier locations inhabited by some pretty nasty creatures...like this one, perhaps? (right)



SO, WHEN'S THE BETA?

Blizzard is betting on a four or five year life cycle for *World of WarCraft*; the story never really ends, it just keeps getting bigger. There will be both live content updates and retail expansion sets, although no decision has been made as to how often content will be added to the world. The company is even planning for the possibility of technological upgrades—that is, not just expansion sets to add content, but expansion sets to upgrade the game engine as it becomes outdated. According to the team, this function has been part of the game's architecture from the start.

That's all way down the road, though. The question on the lips of most fans right now is "When's the beta?" And Q3 is the answer (that's sometime between August and October). Like most MMORPG betas, it'll be done in stages, so you might not get a chance to join in until closer to the end of the year. And competition will be tough.

Despite the fact that the final won't ship for at least another year, there's already a pretty compelling version of the game up and running within the company. In fact, it already plays so well—we know, we played it—staff have been using up their free time to take characters in the Human and Dwarven lands up to level 30. In a few cases, staff have been logging more than 25 hours in a 48-hour weekend period accompanied by their wives and daughters. Which bodes well for any potential *WarCraft* widowers out there. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" might be a suitable mantra.

PC

MMOARPG IS LIKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE. HERE ARE FIVE VITAL PIECES...

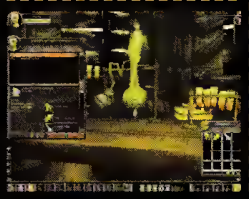
3. INSTANCING!

One of the biggest challenges Blizzard faces is how to discourage negative play styles, such as farming (staying in the same place and repeatedly killing creatures to amass experience) and camping (waiting around for item-yielding events to reoccur—i.e., "It's time to slay the dragon"). "What we're adding are certain key areas of the world that are 'instanced,'" explains Adham. "So, if you get a quest to go into the dead mines, for example, you might receive a private instance of that area. This means you can go into that area and have a gaming experience that feels like a single-player experience that is balanced and private to you or your group, and you don't have to worry about collision with other players." Keeping a level of realism in sync with these private episodes will be a considerable challenge.



4. SKILLS!

Primary (core) skills and secondary skills make up each character class; again, the system is considerably more developed than anything in the genre. Core skill potential (such as a warrior's ability to use an ax) increases automatically every time you level up, but you'll still have to exercise your abilities to hone them. So, unlike other MMORPGs, you won't need to worry about allocating points to the core skills and abilities of your class, making it impossible to inadvertently mess up your character by misspending points; each class will always have—at their core—all the skills they should. Secondary skills might include lock picking or first aid, and trade skills such as alchemy, blacksmithing, herbalism, and mining are also available. Different race/class combinations can buy different skills too—if they're deemed worthy, that is.



5. QUESTS!

We've been assured that beneath a seemingly simple surface lies a quest system far more advanced than any we've seen before. Initially, it will act as a basic tutorial, with the first quests being simple affairs (i.e., a marked NPC tells you to go somewhere, deliver something, and return). As you level up, the quests grow more complicated: You'll be asked escort someone and prevent bandits from attacking, or to gather together players and explore treacherous places. Thankfully, quests will be designed to discourage the negative play styles common in MMORPGs (see Instancing!). Says Adham, "The guy who stands in the same place for eight hours killing things will find he has less experience than the guy who's bumping into people, grouping, and doing quests." He'll probably be bored to tears, too.



SPACE RACES

The *Star Wars* universe has been richly populated through both the five movies (to date) and the countless comic books and novels so familiar to the geekiest of *Star Wars* geeks. And while you may not get to play as your favorite species (no Ewoks, Jawas, or Hutts, but don't think you won't see them around), you'll have eight to choose from, each with unique properties. They include:



BOTHANS
A race of stealthy and cunning camel-faced humanoids from the planet Bothawui, Bothans make good scouts, spies, mercenaries, or politicians. They're also known for their agility and speed, plus they get a bonus when sliding in melee combat. Sounds like O.J.



HUMANS
The most populous species of sentient beings in the galaxy. Humans are native to multiple planets and are good at all professions, but not great at any one. They're the safe pick when creating a character.



MON CALAMARIS
The squid-like people made memorable by General Akbar in *Return of the Jedi*. Obviously, they're good swimmers, but they also get intelligence bonuses. I guess fish really is brain food.



RODIANS
Like their most well known member, Greedo, the Rodians are shifty, smelly, and generally disliked by the entire galaxy. Therefore, they make great smugglers and bounty hunters. Weirdly, they're also highly skilled entertainers.



TWI'LEKS
The big advantage Twi'leks have over other races is their ability to communicate secretly to one another through subtle movements of their tubular head organs. They're also highly skilled dancers preferred by Jabba the Hutt, and their loyalty rivals that of Wookiees.



TRADOSHANS
The only Tradoshan seen in *Episodes IV* through *VI* was more well known for his action figure than his onscreen time. The bounty hunter Bossk briefly appeared in *Empire Strikes Back*, but that was enough to tell that he came from a race known for its physical brutality.



WOOKIEES
It's our guess that Wookiees will be the most popular species amongst gamers. The question is, how many will play while wearing a full Chewie costume and bandolier (not counting Andrew Pfister)? Wookiees are loyal, strong, hairy, and good with tools.



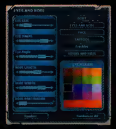
ZABRAKS
The mysterious Zabraks are known mainly through everyone's second favorite Darth, Darth Maul. Maybe it's the full-face tattoos, or maybe it's the small horns growing out of their heads, but there's something sketchy about these mofos.

your character's look. The fine detail level in the faces and bodies allows for lots of customization and almost guarantees that no two characters will look alike. Wookiees can be all sizes (as long as they are big), Rodians can have skin tones other than green, and Zabraks can have one of a number of face tattoos. And you can't really design your own face tattoos unless you choose the image designer profession—in which case, you can design all the face tattoos you want.

Choosing your in-game avatar's profession is your next big task. You follow one of six main career paths (see sidebar) to work your way into one of 30-plus advanced or elite professions, including—and no, we're not kidding—chef, architect, and dancer. Sure, you could be a bounty hunter or a ranger or a combat medic—you could even put in the ton of work it takes to be a Jedi—but who cares about that stuff when you could be a Wookiee hairdresser? Every Galaxies profession is crucial to the game experience; since the world's economy is self-supporting, players must exchange goods and services just as they would in the real world.

Once your character is ready to go and you've plopped him or her down in the world, you'll find an infinite number of things to do. Start exploring and building up experience points. Pick up ➔





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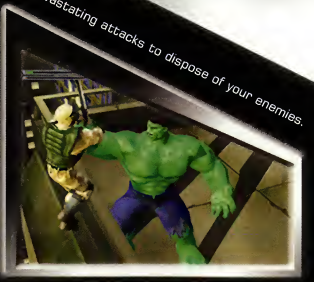
Battle notorious classic villains and massive new foes. Fight up to 10 enemies at once.



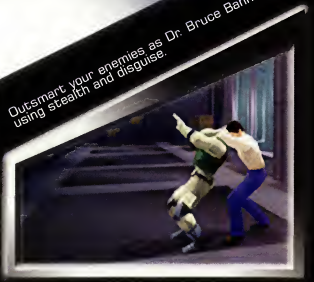
25 fully destructible and interactive environments - if you can see it, you can smash it.

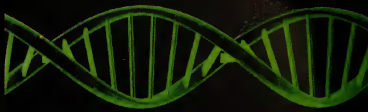


45 devastating attacks to dispose of your enemies.



Outsmart your enemies as Dr. Bruce Banner, using stealth and disguise.











FUTURE GAMES No. 2

STAR WARS GALAXIES PC

FINDING YOUR INNER WOOKIEE



PC

PLANET HOPPING

Galaxies will offer plenty of places to go and lots of scenery to see. Here's a breakdown of the currently planned planets, but don't be surprised if more open up in the future.

CORELLIA: A central location in the *Star Wars* universe that has never appeared in any of the movies, Corellia is Han Solo's birthplace.
DANTOOINE: Every one knows Princess Leia gave up Dantooine as the spot of the rebel hideout in *Star Wars*. That was so not cool.
DATHOMIR: Watch out for the Force-sensitive witches riding rancors. Like that needed to be explained to you.
ENDOR: Be sure to stop by Wicket W. Warwick's tree house and kick that creepy little troll-faced teddy bear in the teeth. Ewoks are freaky.
LOK: Don't forget to pack your fire-resistant Goron tunic when you visit this lava world. Oops, wrong game.
NABOO: Princess Amadala's Earth-like home. Yo baby, can I holla at you?
RORI: Rori is one of Naboo's small moons, and it features a similar environment to the planet. It has never been mentioned in *Star Wars* mythology.
TALUS: A rather bland planet similar to system-mate Corellia. It features lots of forests and fields punctuated by the occasional scenic ravine.
TATOOINE: Tatooine, the most-familiar *Star Wars* planet, is a hotbed of smuggling activities and is crawling with Hutts, Rodians, and weird-looking oboists.
YAVIN 4: The jungle moon that served as the launch pad for the rebel attack on the Death Star in *Star Wars*, Yavin 4 has been crawling with Imperial troops ever since. Go there if you don't mind chillin' with lots of Imperials.



If LucasArts is banking on one feature to ensure the success of *Star Wars Galaxies*—its upcoming massively multiplayer online role-playing game—it's this: It hopes that providing a generation of fans the opportunity to live, work, and experience life in the *Star Wars* universe will tap into the one most powerful fantasy shared by millions of 18-to-34-year-old dorks...outside of seeing Princess Leia naked. No, sorry, you won't see that in *Galaxies*, but you will get to see and do just about anything else your young Padawan heart desires.

The game is currently in development by LucasArts (the gaming arm of LucasFilm) and Sony Online Entertainment (the game developers who brought you *EverQuest*, the most successful MMORPG to date). Understandably, *Galaxies* was often referred to it as "*Star Wars* meets *EverQuest*" early on. But as you'll see, it's far more complex than that.

The experience begins as it does in most RPGs: creating a character. You decide which of the eight available species you'd like to play as and then develop











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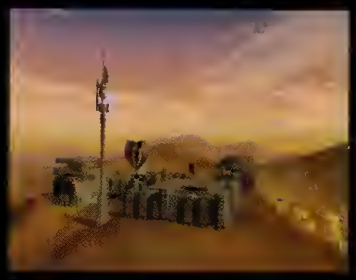


random missions at a mission terminal. Visit what the game's developers call theme parks, designated areas in which NPCs (non player characters) send you on a series of interconnected missions surrounding a particular story arc.

Of course, many missions involve getting your hands dirty with a little combat. Player-versus-player combat isn't allowed in certain areas, but in others you're free to challenge someone to a duel, or to help out the player association or faction (Empire or Rebels) you're associated with in a battle. The RPG-like rules-based combat system is really turn-based beneath it all, although it looks fluid and real. Players can have special abilities based on their skill set, and hit points fall into three separate categories: health, action, and mind.

You can also engage in one of the game's coolest aspects: training a pet. Visit a creature handler (yet another profession option) and, for a fee, you'll get a pet that sticks by you as a loyal friend and, sometimes, guardian. Pets range from rancors to minocks, will respond to verbal commands, and over time will even learn the name you give them. It's interesting to note that other NPCs, like droids, stormtrooper squads, and AT-STs, work in a similar way.

The world of *Star Wars Galaxies* is incredibly rich and complex. You'll probably never see or do everything offered, but if you acquire the right skills and friends to adventure with (don't forget to include a hairdresser and/or a tailor in your party), you'll see and experience everything in the *Star Wars* universe you ever wondered about, but didn't see in the movies.

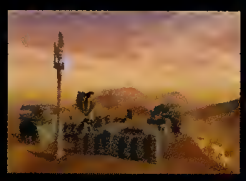




SEE AND DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING YOUR YOUNG PADAWAN HEART DESIRES















WILL WORK FOR MIDI-CHLORIANS

If you're expecting to just live off the galactic dole, you're wrong. Everybody in Galaxies needs a jobby-job, otherwise nothing would get done. Here's a quick breakdown of the starting professions and their respective skill sets:

ARTISAN: Anyone looking to manufacture objects (the ability to produce really good items like blasters will be invaluable in Galaxies) should start off as an artisan. Other careers that split off from here include tailor, weaponsmith, and yes, hairdresser.

BRAWLER: It's pretty obvious what lines of work you'll be engaging in. Good for people with anger-management issues.

ENTERTAINER: Entertainers are among the game's most crucial classes. Players regenerate by watching people dance or play music, especially when recovering from trauma or shock wounds that require long-term recovery and are tough for standard medics to cure.

MARKSMAN: Ranged weapons like blasters are the forte of the marksman, and anyone who wants to use one of those weapons will need to learn marksman skills. A good starting point for someone looking for a more militaristic career path.

MEDIC: Medics are valuable sidekicks; they can heal your battle wounds and are good at manufacturing medicines and health packs, which you can then buy.

SCOUT: Another crucial member of any party, scouts can harvest natural resources and can set up campsites while you're out exploring. Later, they can move into jobs like creature handler.





FUTURE GAMES No. 3

TRUE FANTASY LIVE

XBOX

IT'S ALL PART OF OUR MMORPG FANTASY











← The character-creation system guarantees a diverse population in the world of *True Fantasy Live*. You can mold your online avatar in the image of, well, anybody, and then customize and tweak your character's fighting attributes for maximum battle performance. We dig the girls with the big swords.



To assess *True Fantasy Live Online* as a mix of *Final Fantasy* and *PSO* wouldn't be fair, but only because we still don't know enough about it to call it anything else. This MMORPG isn't coming out until next year, and details about how the game plays are quite scarce, so we've sent our pal and *Famitsu Xbox* editor Koji Aizawa on a mission...

"Finally, a killer app that only Xbox can handle is coming!"

That's what I thought when I first saw *True Fantasy Live Online* at last year's Tokyo Game Show. The game is scheduled for release in Japan by the end of the year, but new info on the game is hard to come by.

What do we know? Well, for starters, the character-creation feature is so detailed, you can make your own lookalike anime-style characters. There are also many modes of transportation, including dragons, horses, and carriages. The adventure starts in a town in the Kingdom of Creria and leads you to a massive outside world of underground dungeons and vast grassy fields, not to mention numerous battles against huge bosses. The game features not only voice chat, but also keyboard support for communicating with other players. This is all the information we know so far—the actual details regarding how the game plays still haven't been publicly announced.

For the exclusive information I was able to get (some of which I didn't even write about in my own magazine, *Famitsu Xbox*), I traveled to Fukuoka, a city in western Japan, and visited Level 5, the developer of *True Fantasy Live Online*. Level 5 is a group of talented guys previously known for the *Dark Cloud* franchise on PS2. They are also working on *Dragon Warrior VIII*, the next installment of the most popular RPG series in Japan. Basically, it's safe to say the company is one of the hottest developers in this country right now. I talked to Level 5's president and got a chance to see the game in action. *TFLO* looks incredibly beautiful—the world is so detailed and immense, you really get a feel for the depth and dimension the finished game is going to have.

-Koji Aizawa, *Famitsu Xbox*







← Ah, to be young and in love. We've apparently stumbled upon a late-night rendezvous—he stares at her with longing desire, while she contemplates whacking him over the head with her giant sword and taking his cash. Those crazy kids...







GOING LIVE

GMA CHATS WITH MICROSOFT'S ANDRE VAIGNAUD ABOUT THE CURRENT (AND FUTURE) STATE OF XBOX LIVE. JACK IN...

Microsoft is hoping *True Fantasy Live Online* will give Xbox Live (and, in turn, the Xbox itself) a much-needed boost in Japan. But back in the States, Bill and the Boys are quite pleased with the way their online gaming network has been performing since it launched last fall. *GMR* talked with Live's Andre Vrignaud about where the service is right now, and where Redmond wants it to be.

GMR: Let's start with a summary of how Live has been doing since the launch. When are people online, and what are they playing?

AV: On average, people play 2.5 hours a day when they play. The interesting thing is that when they're actually playing, they're playing at peak time (8 p.m. PST), during the middle of prime time, and they're going online and having these social experiences with their friends instead of watching television. We can also take a look back at the holidays: The top three Xbox titles all happened to be Live titles. They also happened to be the top three titles being played online: *Ghost Recon*, *Mech Assault*, and *Unreal Championship*. What's interesting about those is they all attached to the Starter Kit at over 80 percent. It's been incredibly popular and successful, and we're really pleased with the launch so far.

GMR: What kind of user feedback have you been getting?

AV: Generally, very positive. People are really happy; they're enjoying the features. Voice is one of the biggest pieces; they love the fact that they can talk and communicate with one another. Having GamerTags is really a significant piece, too—we've seen a lot of people complain about gaming where you don't really have a unique tag and you have to sign up for multiple accounts for different games.

But the main complaint people have had reminds me of the old Queen song, "we want it all, we want it all, we want it all, we want it now." We'll look at the forums and we see people saying they want tournaments or the ability for voice across games or the ability to talk to people and not be in a game. Not that these are necessarily on our list right now, but this is the sort of stuff we take into account when developing future versions of the service.

One of the biggest things people want is more ways to build community, and that is something we're absolutely focused on. We're not giving specific details, but you can imagine we're looking to open up the service to more people, going outside of the service where you might be able to do interesting things with it, perhaps by allowing communication with other devices beyond the Xbox.

GMR: What determines if a game is going to have extra fees?

AV: Quite honestly, it's up to the publisher. So far, I think *PSO* is the only game that will have a monthly fee, but I don't think that's a surprise based on earlier versions of the game. The majority of the titles I'm looking at on my whiteboard right now through 2005 aren't talking about monthly fees. That said, some of them might have content download capabilities; at some point, you might get some really cool and compelling download package that people want to buy. At that point, maybe there'll be some fee.

GMR: Is Live an entirely closed network, or is it possible to have cross-platform play?

AV: We don't like the word closed, because we're actually doing a lot to open it up. A lot of the community stuff I was talking about, such as extending to other devices, is really about opening up the network in ways that are secure. It's the reason you don't see cheating—you don't see GameSharks, for example. It's unclear whether you'll ever see something like a PC, in a gaming sense, connected to it. The PC is an inherently nontrustable device, and the whole point of the security is that we have these trusted devices that we know are safe and secure. It's the same reason we don't allow modded Xboxes; we detect that and keep them off because we want to protect that level playing field for everybody.

GMR: How many users are you estimating you'll have by the time the next Xbox rolls around?

AV: Generally, we're not thinking hundreds of thousands—we're thinking millions. A lot of what you're going to see this year are programs that are focused on pushing that pretty hard.

GMR: Will there be any major changes to the network when the new hardware hits, or are you content with the current structure?

AV: There will be major changes, but they're not necessarily tied to the next Xbox. There's a ton of stuff coming down the line. Even for titles this fall and for spring of next year, you're going to see new features and ways of using Live that just literally don't exist right now. Beyond that, it's going to keep growing and going forward. The plans on the final box are just being discussed, debated, and worked on....There's nothing coalesced yet. But I wouldn't be surprised if there was some really cool stuff coming out.

GMR: Any hints you want to drop right before E3?

AV: More, better, bigger. We're going to have some killer games to show off—you'll be able to see some of the Rare stuff for the first time, and that'll be pretty cool. You'll also see some of our larger titles...and I can't really go into details, but there'll be something cool.

"GENERALLY, WE'RE NOT THINKING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS—WE'RE THINKING MILLIONS."











FUTURE GAMES No. 4

FINAL FANTASY XI PS2 PC

SQUARE'S PS2 EPIC IS ON ITS WAY



Sure, you can be a mighty rat-slayer in *EverQuest*, or bandy about as a lizard warrior in *Asheron's Call*, but later this year, Square is going to take its own healthy slice out of the MMORPG pie when it unleashes *Final Fantasy XI* on the western world.

While the exact release date has yet to be confirmed, the current buzz has the game hitting store shelves in either December 2003, or in the first quarter of 2004 for the PS2. The PC version could ship either simultaneously or slightly ahead of the PS2 version. What's interesting is that the PS2 version will be published by Sony Computer Entertainment of America (bundled with the mandatory PS2 hard drive) while the PC version will be published by Square Enix itself. Pricing hasn't been settled as of this printing, but we guesstimate the price will fall around the $100 mark ($50 for the game, $50 for the HD). It could end up being a bit cheaper than that, but you'll also want to factor in the monthly fee (approx. $10) players will pay to Square Enix for a subscription to *FFXI*'s PlayOnline service. It's not an ISP—it's the server on which you'll be playing the game.

WHAT IN THE WORLD?

COME WITH US ON A TOUR OF FINAL FANTASY XI'S THREE WORLDS

***FFXI* takes place in the world of Vana'Diel, which itself encompasses three countries: the Republic of Bastok, the Kingdom of San D'Oria, and the Federation of Windurst. Unlike most neighboring countries in RPGs, these three are not at war with each other, which lets players roam freely from their capital city of choice (you choose which city to start in) into the woods for some manly monster-slaying.**

Released in Japan in May 2002, the game has already gathered roughly 200,000 combined subscribers of both the PS2 and PC versions. This April, an expansion pack, titled *Final Fantasy XI: Girade no Genei*, was released, adding job classes and character types (like dragoons, awww yeaaaah!). Although unconfirmed as of press time, chances are good that the U.S. version will contain both the original and expansion pack contents when the game is released here later this year.

The other bit of coolness is that both PS2 gamers and PC gamers will be able to play in the same games, online, together. No system bias here, folks. This helps to create an MMORPG community unlike any other, ensuring that no matter what time you log on, someone should be available to hook up and party.



← One of the cool features in *FFXI* is the ability to leave a character online to sell items found in quests. You can even create "mules" (characters created simply to hold items) to do your bidding, literally. So, if you've found some rare weapons or armor that you can't use or don't need, specify a price, set your mule to hawk your wares, and interested players can come up and buy these items from you. Easy profit!



STAY IN TOUCH

NO TIME FOR CHIT-CHAT? THEN YOU'RE PLAYING THE WRONG GAME, SIA!

In case you're wondering whether *FFXI* supports voice-chat, it does not. That's fine by us, since we'd have a hard time believing that the black mage in our party was from Greenbow, Alabama, anyway.

Naturally, this means communication is going to happen via a keyboard and the onscreen chat window. If you're planning to play the PC version, your problems are already solved. If you don't have a keyboard but have a PC, something's wrong with you. If you're going to be playing the PS2 version, you have one of two options. The first is to buy a USB keyboard and have that sucker at the ready while you do your game-playing on the DualShock controller. Your other option is to grab the Logitech NetPlay controller (see *What You Need*), which combines the functionality of a PS2 controller and a full-size keyboard ($69.95). Your final, unspoken option is to use the onscreen keyboard manipulated by your DualShock, but as you've probably guessed, that would suck. Upgrade.



PLAYING GOD—OR AT LEAST MOMMY

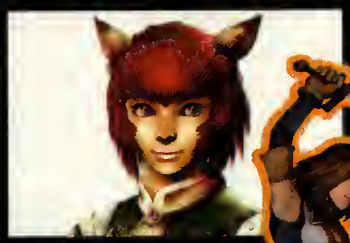
FFXI PUTS THE "OOOH!" IN "YOU" WITH ITS VERSATILE CHARRCTEA CRERTION MODE. WHRT SORT OF WRRRIOR WILL YOU CRERTE?

An MMORPG thrives on its ability to offer the player the chance to create a virtual self that reflects his/her own tastes and attitudes. If *Dungeons & Dragons* let kids imagine themselves as noble warriors or wizards when an RPG still consisted of rolling an 8-sided die, you can imagine the appeal of seeing it onscreen in beautiful 3D.

If each character in an MMORPG is to be differentiated from the other, oh, 500,000 characters online, the game must have a powerful character editor. *Phantasy Star Online Ep. I & II* has a fairly diverse set of characters, classes, and races to choose from, while *EverQuest Online Adventure*'s Character Creation mode consists of approximately four different heads and bodies—which is, how do you say, lame.

You'll be glad to know, then, that running into an unfashionable clone of yourself in *FFXI* is unlikely. Multiplying the number of races (Humes, Elvaan, Tarutaru, Mithra, Galka) times the number of job classes (warrior, monk, white mage, black mage, red mage, thief, knight, shadowknight, beastmaster, bard, and ranger) times gender (male/female) times size times hair color (lots) equals tons of choices. The best part is that even if you've invested a lot of time developing, say, a warrior, you can switch job classes at a later date (turning into a white mage for example, to learn healing spells) and still retain all of the abilities you earned before. This adds even more flexibility to *FFXI*'s character classes.











WHAT YOU NEED

GETTING ONLINE TRKES STUFF. WHRT STUFF? THIS STUFF...

The sparse environments and other feature-lacking attributes of *EverQuest Online Adventures* (which tens of people are playing) function perfectly with just a Memory Card and the stock-standard PS2. But maximizing the thrillation packed into *Final Fantasy XI*'s rich, event-laden world requires three specific pieces of hardware.

First up is the PS2 Network Adaptor, which you'll need to hook up to the PlayOnline service. (Note: *Final Fantasy XI* supports broad AND narrowband.) You'll also need to have an existing ISP, since PlayOnline is not a service provider like Earthlink, but primarily a server for game-playing, much like Blizzard's Battle.net.

Subscription to PlayOnline gets you more than just *FFXI* playtime, though. Through PlayOnline, you also get a POL e-mail address, and can play other Square-related games like the *Tetra Master* card game (from *FFIX*) and earn special cards and decks.

The other peripheral you'll need is the Sony HardDrive (which will come bundled with *FFXI*, so no worries there). Last, if you're playing the PS2 version, you'll want to pick up Logitech's NetPlay Controller for ease of communication.







GET YOUR WAR ON

KEYBORRDS RND PLRYING DRESS-UP IS FINE. BUT WE WRNT TO KICK RSS

Once you're done primping and preening in front of the mirror with your virtual bad self, it's time to kick it live in the woods (alone or with friends) outside San D'oria, Bastok, and Windurst.

Designed to be simple enough for beginners to enjoy but still challenging for more experienced gamers, *Final Fantasy XI*'s battles take place in real-time, but this isn't quite an action game. If you're running through the woods, for example, you can target an enemy like a wild rabbit. Once locked on to this fearsome creature, your character will circle the enemy, attacking only when you move within striking distance. While your character is preoccupied with the battle, you can, via a set of auxiliary menus, keep his health up or select from learned weapon abilities.

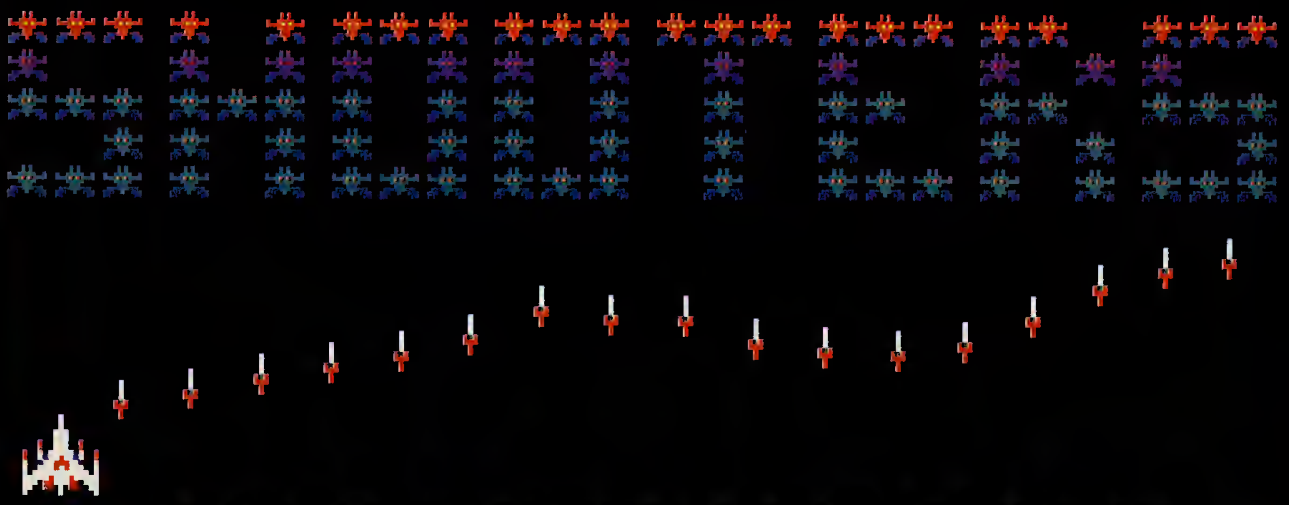
If you're fighting solo, you'll get all the experience to yourself, but when possible, you should form a party. After all, it's not uncommon to be locked in combat with an Orcish Thug and, while you're distracted, to have an Orcish Grappler sneak up behind you and attack you. Being in a party with one or more people (up to six people can form a party, and up to three parties can link together for a massive mini-army of 18 people) can help even the odds when you've got a bogey on your six. Having a tarutaru around to cast a healing spell when you're getting rocked by a tough monster means one less thing you have to worry about.

Finally, unlike other *Final Fantasy* games, random battles are a thing of the past in *FFXI*. All enemies can be seen in the playing field.





GMR'S REALLY USEFUL GUIDE TO SHOOTERS



FROM A TO ZAXXON: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC



KEY: IMPORT DOMESTIC

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

FROM THEN TO NOW: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GENRE

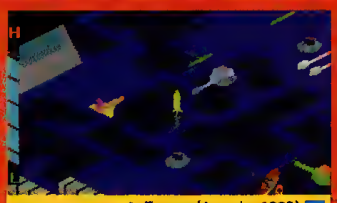
The shooter, provided you're referring to the 2D kind, first made its name when *Space Invaders* landed in arcades back in 1978, some 25 years ago. The only thing that stood between the waves of marching, malevolent drones and the destruction of the planet Earth was 1) you, 2) a few lousy barricades, and 3) your trusty spaceship. The better you were, the faster they came. This path in life was not easy.

While many competitors rushed to duplicate the success of *Space Invaders*—a game which, at the time, looked unlike anything anyone had ever seen before—it wasn't until 1981, when Namco let loose *Galaga*, that

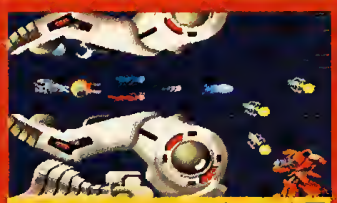

→ *Time Pilot* (Arcade, 1982)


→ *Gradius/Nemesis* (Arcade, 1985)


→ *Raycrisis* (PS, 2000)


→ *Zaxxon* (Arcade, 1982)

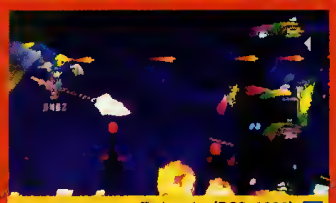

→ *Axelay* (SNES, 1992)


→ *R-Types* (PS, 1999)



→ *Tiny Phalanx* (*Zero Divide*, PS, 1995)


→ *Sengoku Blade* (Saturn, 1996)


→ *Einhander* (PS2, 1998)

Space Invaders met its match. *Galaga* trumped Taito's *Invaders* with color and proactive kamikaze dive-bombing aliens who didn't just shuffle back and forth. And so, the revolution of 2D shooters began. Games like Williams' *Defender*, and Konami's *Time Pilot* and *Gradius*, and Capcom's *Forgotten Worlds* kept kids' quarters piled atop arcade machine marquees throughout the heyday of the early '80s.


→ *Forgotten Worlds* (Arcade, 1988)

THE GOLDEN YEARS

The golden age of shooters didn't really kick in until the 16-bit era, when processors in home consoles like the Genesis, SNES, and TurboGrafx 16 were powerful enough to manage tons of onscreen sprites, hectic action, and lavish backgrounds that games like *M.U.S.H.A.*, *Axelay*, and *R-Type III* displayed so well. One of the most popular genres of the day, the shooter experienced a boom in popularity that lasted nearly five years.

RINGS OF SATURN

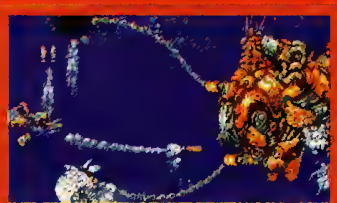
Whether you owned one, knew of someone who had one, or dismissed it as an overpriced and underpowered dinosaur crushed by the 3D-friendly PlayStation, the Sega Saturn was, and still is, home to the greatest stable of 2D shooters ever. Built as the ultimate 2D machine and utilizing twin sprite processors, the Saturn was bred to host games like *Galactic Attack* (aka *Layer Section*) and *Darius Gaiden*. But, as import-savvy gamers will tell you, the real action was in Japan. In a country where shooters were still popular in arcades, ports quickly made their way home to the Saturn, which, by its life's end, was the umbrella under which *Soukyugurentai*, *Sengoku Blade*, *Battle Garegga*, *Shienryu*, *Do Don Pachi*, and *Thunder Force V* flew. Using the Saturn-based ST-V arcade board, Sega-friendly developer Treasure released for arcade and Saturn what is widely acknowledged as the greatest shooter ever: *Radiant Silvergun*.

STATION BITES BACK

Just because the Saturn is home to the hardcore crowd's favorite shooters doesn't mean the genre took a backseat on the PlayStation. Although the library began with a mere trickle of titles, like *Philosoma* and the reinvention of the SNES

"...THE SATURN WAS, AND STILL IS, THE HOME TO THE GREATEST SHOOTERS EVER."


→ Konami's *Sexy Parodius* was a parody of its own classic shooters (PS, 1996)


→ *In the Hunt* (Saturn, 1995)


→ *Soukyugurentai* (Saturn, 1997)

INSERT COINS TO CONTINUE

classic *Phalanx* as *Tiny Phalanx* (an easter-egg hidden in the PlayStation game *Zero Divide*), things soon picked up with Square's *Einhander*, *G Darius*, *R-Type Delta*, and the mighty triumvirate of the Working Designs'–published games *Raystorm*, *Thunderforce V*, and *Raycrisis*.

DIG THE NEW BREED

You'll be glad to know that if you're a shooter-loving gamer with a Dreamcast, PS2, or GameCube, you too have options. The DC library is loaded with excellent shooters like *Giga Wing 1 & 2*, *Gunbird 2*, and *Mars Matrix*. *Ikaruga* and *Zero Gunner 2* are available as imports. PS2 owners can battle space aliens via *Gradius III & IV*, or play one-time import *Shikigami No Shiro* reborn as the unfortunately-packaged *Mobile Light Force 2* (cheap at only $15). GameCubers jonesing for some intense intergalactic battles can run out right this moment and grab *Ikaruga*.

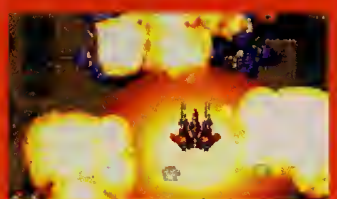
DEAD OR ALIVE

The question now is whether or not the shooter genre can survive. With the near-death of arcades, you won't find young folks standing in line for another shot at *Galaga*, quarters falling out of their pockets. With arcade shooters all but extinct, shooters must now be developed specifically for the home market, and the home market ain't listening. While a few big-name titles are hitting shelves in Japan this year, how many will reach the United States is uncertain.



→ *Gatchaman the Shooting* is developed by Warashi, makers of *Gekioh* (PS, 2002)

THE QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER OR NOT THE SHOOTER GENRE CAN SURVIVE.


→ *Gekioh Shooting King* (PS, 2002)


→ *Sol Divide* (PS, 2003)


→ *Silpheed The Lost Planet* (PS2, 2001)

→ Considering how hard it is to find a good shooter these days, gamers should be happy to know that neo-classics and not-so-classics like XS's *Mobile Light Force* (*Gunbird*), Natsume's *Gekioh* (*Shienryu*), and Agetec's *Strikers 1945* for PlayStation, along with *Mobile Light Force 2* (*Shikigami No Shiro*) and Working Design's *Silpheed: The Lost Planet* for PS2 can be found for $15.

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

BIG SHOTS

GMA SPEAKS WITH THE MEN WHO WOULD SAVE THE UNIVERSE

It's no secret that shooters are, today, a rare breed. But are they really dying? Can the genre survive innovation or will it die like the dodo? To help us out with these cosmic questions, we asked the men behind two of the most high-profile shooters of the year (*Ikaruga* and *R-Type Final*) to give us their thoughts.

First up is Masahito Maekawa, the president of Treasure (*Ikaruga*). When we asked him where he thought the genre was headed, Maekawa-san told us, "Shooters are not as popular now as they were in the '80s and early '90s. That's a fact. However, this genre will not die. There are still numerous fans of these kinds of games. *Ikaruga* is now a great success not only in its GameCube version, but also in its arcade version. Besides, we at Treasure really love "2D system" shooting games. We have the know-how in this domain, and we know that all the fans expect some new titles that simultaneously use 2D traditional game systems and high-quality 3D graphics. That's why we will still continue developing those kinds of exciting games."

Brave talk from a man who surely knows what he's talking about, but on the flipside of the coin, we spoke with Kazuma Kujo, director of *R-Type Final*. Kujo-san provided a more sober perspective on the genre, explaining, "I believe the shooter has a universal appeal to gamers. But most people probably don't think they need to buy and play such a game at home. If the trend continues, the genre will be dead. The feasibility does matter to us. It means that people don't care about shooters—not only gamers, but retailers, game magazines, executives, and programmers in game companies...everybody is losing interest in shooters. That's the truth. The situation for this genre is becoming tougher."

Fine-tuned opinions from two minds that matter, but the final word is in the hands of the consumer, where money talks and shooters walk.

TO READ THE COMPLETE INTERVIEWS CHECK WWW.GAMERS.COM


→ *Ikaruga* (GC, 2003)

→ Can *Ikaruga* and *R-Type Final* keep the shooter from extinction?

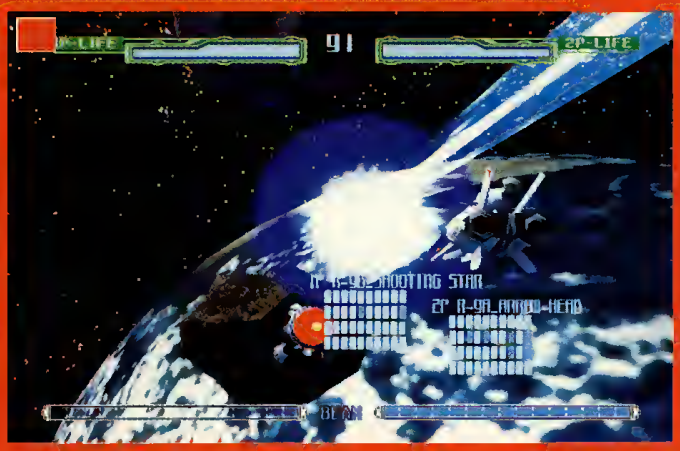

→ *R-Type Final* (PS2, 2003)

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE HOPE OF THE GENRE LIES ON THE WINGS OF THESE FOUR SHOOTERS

We here at *GMR* like to think that there will always be a place for shooters (sorry, but you won't catch us using the word "shmups"). After all, if dancing games, dating sims, light-gun shooters, and virtual-talking-fishman games can survive, then so can 2D shooters.

But in case you didn't notice, these types of games aren't exactly flooding store shelves, much to the dismay of hardcore gamers nationwide. All hope is not lost, however, as evidenced by *Ikaruga*'s recent arrival. Good stuff, surely, but what, then, is supposed to sate our appetites in the months to come? For your perusal, we present four shooters (one of which, *Gradius V*, is already en route to the States) that can help fill the status quo. Don't say we didn't warn you.



GRADIUS V (PS2)

The *Gradius* series, Options and all, returns this fall with yet another challenging excursion into outer space, titled *Gradius V*. Fresh off a cameo in *Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner*, Vic Viper takes to the skies once again to defeat the Bacterian alien force.

Hardcore gamers will delight in knowing that famed development team Treasure is behind the wheel of *Gradius V*. A sort of homecoming for the Treasure team (which is comprised of many former Konami programmers), the group's visual work on *Graidus V* will be instantly familiar to veterans of *Radiant Silvergun*, *Ikaruga*, and *Bangai-O*. Featuring seven levels, and 12 power-ups worth of stressful space combat, Vic Viper will take the Bacterian forces head-on with its trusty arsenal of Options, missiles, force fields, and Ripple lasers.

While the game is rendered in 3D (like *Ikaruga*), the action takes place on a side-scrolling 2D plane. Basically, *V* plays just like in the good ol' days: with an insane level of difficulty. Success will be, as any good *Gradius* player knows, earned only by learning the enemies' patterns. *Gradius V* will hit stores late this holiday season.



R-TYPE FINAL (PS2)

In what is to be the series' swan song, *R-Type Final* for PS2 will bring with it not one, not two, but more than 60 ships from the vaults of Irem's history when it's released in Japan this June.

R-Type Final features customizable ships (you can change ship colors and weapons to suit your taste), and an A.I. mode that lets you program a ship's behavior and send it through the game, unmanned (or pit it against a friend's fighter saved to a Memory Card). Although this will be the last *R-Type* game ever made, don't count out seeing the R-ships in another Irem game. *Final*'s director Kazuma Kujo tells us, "That's a possibility. We're making more than 50 ships, and we have our personal feelings for them. Perhaps they'll make an appearance as 'bad guys' in a different type of game."

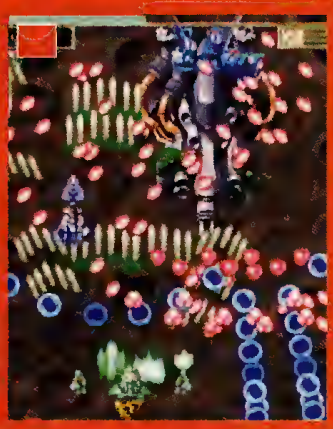
No U.S. release date has been announced, but expect news soon.

DDDDNPACHI (PS2)

The full title of this game is *DoDonPachi Daioujou*, and it's the long-awaited sequel to the Saturn classic, developed by Cave and published by Arika in Japan.

A beautiful-looking shooter cast in the classic mold, this game stays true to its earlier incarnations by maintaining its time-based combo meter. Each time you destroy an enemy, your meter fills. Provided you keep killing enemies before the meter drops completely, your score will continue to multiply. Filled with extras and options, we'd like to see this game make it to the States.





...WE THINK THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A PLACE FOR SHOOTERS IN THE WORLD

XII STAG (PS2)

In its first week of release in Japan, Taito's *XII Stag* sold a mere 965 copies, compared to *Final Fantasy X-2*'s 1.2 million. A sobering wake-up call for shooters, no doubt.

The most likely candidate for release in the States as *Mobile Light Force 3* (with, hopefully, not the same crap cover art as the first two unrelated games), *XII Stag*'s claim to fame is a rotating ship with a powerful side-shot, which helps players rack up high-scoring combos. With no extra features to speak of or brand legacy to call on, *XII Stag* is a niche product with limited appeal.





ILLUSTRATION ARTHUR MOUNT

CROWD CONTROL

GMR KICKS IT LIVE WITH THE PRODUCER OF THE DYNASTY WARRIORS SERIES

It has been only a month since Koei unleashed a million Chinese warriors on us in *Dynasty Warriors 4*. Not knowing exactly what it's like to wear gilded armor and mingle with the likes of LuBu, we sat down with the series' producer, Takazumi Tomoike (to-mo-ee-kay), to find out what makes *Dynasty Warriors 4* go "Wa HAAAA!"

GMR: Can you offer some insight into why Koei, a Japanese company, specializes in games based on Chinese history from 220 to 280? Was *Dynasty Warriors* originally your idea, or did it come from higher up?

TT: For a long time in Japan, people have known about the Tales of the Three Kingdoms through novels and comics, puppet shows and plays. Naturally, Koei used these tales as the basis for its simulation/strategy series *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, but we also created *Kessen 2*, the *Dynasty Warriors* series, and other games that have a slightly different interpretation of the traditional Three Kingdoms tales.

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms was the most appropriate theme to use in order to realize the concept "a warrior worth a thousand," and we took advantage of our option to use Koei's *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* assets.

GMR: The *Dynasty Warriors* games are very popular in Japan and are also gaining ground in the States. Do you think it's hard to get a game with a Chinese theme into American homes, or is that not a concern?

TT: The Three Kingdoms is a popular theme in Japanese culture, but it isn't necessarily popular in the world of games. *Dynasty Warriors* was envisioned as an action game that even people who know nothing about the Three Kingdoms could enjoy. The result is that people who had no interest in the tales are now really into the story. The number of people who have become fascinated with the Tales of the Three Kingdoms through the *Dynasty Warriors* series is growing, and we are delighted about that.

Of course, we were very uncertain about introducing a game based on the Three Kingdoms to the North American market. Given the deep historical background and the character images, it seemed possible that people wouldn't understand or appreciate it. It gave us some confidence to know that people here in Japan who had no interest in the Three Kingdoms could be pulled into the story by means of an action game. We'd be very happy if the series also sparks North American interest in Asian history.

GMR: There are so many generals in the *Dynasty Warriors* universe, it's hard to keep them straight. How do you tell LuBu from Liu Bei?

TT: These are names that most of the North American market is unfamiliar with, so it must be hard to remember all of them. All the characters have idiosyncrasies, so if you can remember "the guy wearing a mask" and "the guy with the iron claws" at first, and then attach the name to the character later, maybe that would help.

GMR: Now that *DW4* is finished, are you going straight to work on *DW5*, or will you and the team try something new?

TT: *Dynasty Warriors 4* will also be released in Europe and Asia, not just Japan and America. Now, we're converting *DW4* to PAL, so anything about *DW5* has yet to be announced. Although we still aim to expand the fan base of the *Dynasty Warriors* series, if there is demand in America to produce other works with similar themes using this game engine, we will do our best to answer that demand.

GMR: Now that you have this great game engine, any thoughts on doing a sequel to *Destrega*?

TT: You know *Destrega*? Omega Force was very confident in *Destrega* when it went on sale in the United States, but unfortunately, we can't say that it was a success. Like *WinBack*, a lot of thought has since gone into doing another *Destrega*, and I'd like to tackle it again using a new game engine that will express its full potential. I'm sorry to say that we have no plans for it, but if you know of anything that can help make it a reality, let me know.

GMR: Having developed *DW3* for Xbox, what do you think of the hardware? Was it easier to manipulate so many onscreen characters than it was on PS2?

TT: Certainly, I think Xbox is a system with some amazing capabilities. I also think developers are eager to make full use of its capabilities. But you know well the extent to which Xbox has penetrated the Japanese market. If we didn't take profit into consideration, it would have been easier to add more to the Xbox version. Though perhaps it wasn't ideal, I think it was better to simply move the game over to Xbox with few changes, given the economic realities. Please regard this not as the comment of a game developer, but as the comment of a project manager.

GMR: Have you ever given thought to a massively multiplayer online *Dynasty Warriors* game, where everyone can be a Chinese peasant, grab a sword, and make their way up through the ranks to generalhood?

TT: Upon thinking about developing a game in which players could cooperate and fight online, the designers of *Dynasty Warriors 2* decided to make a stand-alone game using this system. Taking the game online and maintaining the same 60fps action while preserving the game content not only involves technical issues, but includes other issues as well. So, we won't go online in the immediate future, but we are striving to achieve that goal.

GMR: In the *Dynasty Warriors* games, some factual elements are clearly exaggerated for the sake of videogame fun, like the Musou attacks. I imagine some of the outfits are fairly atypical of what people wore in those days (read: what the girls wear). Where did you take great liberty with the characters, and what are some things you didn't alter?

TT: As I mentioned earlier, the *Dynasty Warriors* series is designed to provide action games everyone will enjoy—even people who know nothing about the Three Kingdoms. To broaden the action, some characters use weapons that differ from actual period weapons; we render character appearances the way we do for the same reason.

Having women on the battlefield and having generals brandish fans as weapons may upset purists who know the tales well. But we want them to understand that these variations are not there because we want to impose our own selfish interpretation. We want titles in the series to be able to stand alone as action games independent of their source theme. At the same time, we don't want to detract from our customers' image of the Three Kingdoms. We don't want to break down the powerful images of Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhuge Liang, and the generals of each kingdom.

GMR: Understood. Thanks for spending time with us, and good luck with the next game.

DYNASTY THROUGH THE YEARS

In hindsight...



Dynasty Warriors
Release: June 1997
In a nutshell: A surprisingly competent, pretty 3D fighter in the Soul Blade vein
GMR Rates it: 7/10



Dynasty Warriors 2
Release: October 2000
In a nutshell: Koei shakes its moneymaker after Destrega and WinBack.
GMR Rates it: 7/10



Dynasty Warriors 3
Release. November 2001
In a nutshell: The Dynasty pushes the fog back and fleshes out the gameplay.
GMR Rates it: 8/10



Dynasty Warriors 3 XL
Release. January 2003
In a nutshell: All the fun of DW3 plus extra generals and bodyguards.
GMR Rates it: 8/10



Dynasty Warriors 4
Release: March 2003
In a nutshell: Objectively, the best of the series, but the formula is wearing thin.
GMR Rates it: 6/10

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

LOOKING FOR A NEW HERO!



RENT A HERO No. 1™

レンタヒーロー





TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Violence

SEGA®
CREATED BY AND PRODUCED BY

AIA
PUBLISHED BY

XBOX

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GBA
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REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST



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HOW WE RATE

YOUR GUIDE TO THE GMR SCORING SYSTEM

At *GMR*, we eat, sleep, drink, and occasionally secrete games. If we say something is a crap-sandwich, then don't eat it. If we award it our prestigious Essential Selection award, then you can take your lunch money and blow it on some effervescent digital gaming hoo-ha. Don't hate. Celebrate.

1 KING OF CRAP 2 WASTEOID 3 BROKEN 4 FAULTY 5 AVERAGE 6 GOOD STUFF 7 RECOMMENDED 8 EXCELLENT 9 MUST-HAVE 10 TIMELESS CLASSIC

WARNING!! WHERE MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF A GAME ARE REVIEWED, GMR WILL MENTION DIFFERENCES ONLY IF THEY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY!







→ *MC2* is one of the only racing games to pit bikes against cars, but don't think that's a mismatch—bikes don't get boost to counter their superior handling and acceleration. Still, it takes nerves of carbon fiber to handle a bike going 180mph in some Parisian back alley.







XB

PS2

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

THE STEAMY UNDERBELLY OF STREET RACING EXPOSED! NEWS AT 11

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | XBOX

PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PRICE: $49.99
RELEASE: APRIL 2003
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-8 ONLINE)
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

Midnight Club II should ship with a free sample of Ritalin. The amount of concentration required to maintain control of your car at such incomprehensibly high speeds almost requires some sort of chemical assistance (just joking kids). This is both the upside and the downside of this game. There are moments of stomach-dropping awe and there are moments of stomach-tightening frustration. _MCII_ is fun, but it's not easy to play.

The game's arcade style of racing might not be for everyone—especially those with reflexes dulled by age. Controls are twitchier than a nervous ferret after a triple espresso, but at the same time, they're incredibly forgiving. That sounds like a contradiction, but it's not. If you're crunking down the Champs d'Elyse at 175mph and a Renault (well, not an actual Renault—there are no real-world car licenses in the game) pulls out in front of you, a quick flip of the analog stick will avoid a crash. A more realistic physics engine would spin you out of control in that situation.

MCII's story line has you as an illegal street racer careening through the streets of one of three major cities (Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo, in that order) looking for other illegal street racers with whom to get your race on. As you beat other racers in Career mode, you win their superior cars and unlock more races and more cartoonishly stereo-typical racers.

Races are set in the open city; you determine your own route to checkpoints, so memorizing each city's layout and shortcuts becomes crucial, especially against the savvy opponent A.I.

Most races require you to reach the checkpoints in order, but some put time limits on each leg or leave the checkpoints open for you to cross in any order. These races are the most fun, because you often won't see the other drivers until they're coming at you head on.

In addition to Career mode, there's a separate racing circuit for each city and

2ND. OPINION

I thought the first _Midnight Club_ was a respectable way to spend some time driving in places I ought not to be driving. What made that one special for me is that it was based partly in NYC. The sequel may not be set in New York, but it's a much better (and tougher) game

_James Mielke











→ The fact that *MC2*'s cars and bikes aren't officially licensed isn't really a disappointment. They all have obvious real-world counterparts. What is disappointing is that aren't more muscle cars or other old-school hot-rod models.

two battle modes—Capture the Flag and Detonate—involving power-ups that screw up your opponents. These modes are also available online, which is *MCII*'s other big selling point. Online play is amazingly good; we experienced few lag issues, and the battle modes are especially fun when you're playing with seven friends.

As if all those modes weren't enough to extend replayabilty, Rockstar also included a race editor that lets you set up your own circuits. This is a really cool idea on the surface, but the fact that you can put checkpoints only in certain spots instead of anywhere you want kind of sucks. You can't even put them on the freeways or in the underground areas—places the built-in races let you go.

At first, *MCII* seems too fast, the graphics seem too old school, the writing seems too corny, and the control seems too twitchy. But this game grows on you. You should get hours of enjoyment from it, especially if you spend the bucks to go online.

_Tom Price

GMR QUICK THRILLS 8/10

BETTER THAN: AUTO MODELLISTA
NOT AS GOOD AS: A NEW SET OF WHITEWALLS
WAIT IT FOR IT: SEGA GT ONLINE

[TRICK STYLE]



If you're gonna get good at *MCII*—and if you plan to progress all the way to the streets of Tokyo, you'll have to get good—then you'll need to make the L1 button (or the right analog stick in the Xbox version) your best friend. It's the Weight Transfer button, and it's one of the most crucial elements of control in the game.

In vehicles of the four-wheel variety, Weight Transfer comes in handy at two critical junctions. When you catch air—which you will a lot, thanks to all the ramps, cranes, barges, and other various inclines—it's important to land properly. In midair, hold down the Weight Transfer button and use the stick to control not only your left/right roll, but also your pitch, so you land squarely on your wheels. On land, use Weight Transfer to go up on two wheels so you can fit through narrow spots between cars and buildings.

On motorcycles, Weight Transfer works a little differently. Pull back on the stick while the button is depressed and you'll do a wheelie (which really isn't much more than a show-off move). Use it when steering right and left and your rider will put his knee down so you corner more tightly. You absolutely must do this when riding bikes, and gamers who master this technique will completely own the motorcycle portions of *MCII*.







XB

PS2

GC

BURNOUT 2
TRULY, A SMASHING DRIVE

EVERYONE | GC (REVIEWED) | XBOX | PS2

In case you missed *GMR* #4's comprehensive racing feature last month, know this: *Burnout 2: Point of Impact* has everything under the hood that you need for a smashing good time: the graphics, the control, 60 frames per second, and slo-mo car crashes on par with the best Hollywood has to offer. What's missing? Real cars. And after taking *Burnout*'s irresistible Crash mode for a test drive, we're not surprised.

The game kicks off with a series of short 'n' sweet training missions that instruct the player on how to bump up their speed boost. Catching air and power sliding count, as does nimbly darting down highways and side streets teeming with traffic—an especially exciting (and doubly rewarding) experience when you're slipping between two semis. These simple gameplay bulletpoints bring strategy to an arcadey racer with superb results.

Thirty high-res races crisscross lavishly detailed expanses of road, running the gamut from urban to rural, day to night, rainy to sunny. The mission structure follows a tried-and-true path: Earn enough medals in one tier to unlock the next. Completing certain tasks reveals new cars and a Pursuit mode. There's little here you haven't seen before, but it's exceptionally well done.

So, why do we love this game so much? Crash mode. Each bite-sized course (30 in all) is a puzzle begging to be unlocked: Choose a car and course, then fling yourself at preset traffic patterns in an attempt to rack up the highest score. The result? A glorious spray of sheet metal, sparks, and safety glass. Throw in wraparound sound, screeching tires, and a swooping camera, and you, too, will give thanks to whomever invented replays. As with the first few *Tony Hawk*s, the appeal lies in each round's brevity—you'll give it "just one more shot." Again. And again. And again. Yes, *that* kind of addictive.

Audio/visual asthetes can groove on the Progressive Scan and Dolby Pro-Logic II support; us common folk can fawn lovingly over the spectacular lighting, tactile physics, and kick-out-the-jams techno-rawk. For our money, few racers match the sheer excitement of unleashing the boost on a straightaway to the accompaniment of wailing guitars. *Burnout*'s cars may not bear authentic badges, but its thrill most certainly does.

_David Chen

PUB	ACCLAIM	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	CRITERION SOFTWARE	PLAYERS	1-2
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	U.K.

GMR SMASHING 8/10

BETTER THAN: A REAL FREEWAY PILEUP
JUST AS GOOD AS: MIDNIGHT CLUB 2
WAIT FOR IT: F-ZERO, OR SOMETHING

INSIDE PITCH 2003
LAST, AND DEFINITELY LEAST

EVERYONE | XBOX

Yes, there can be too much of a good thing, especially when the good thing is a bad thing. Baseball is a good thing. Microsoft's *Inside Pitch* is a bad thing. In fact, it's about the worst of the eight dozen or so baseball videogames released this year, and that's no exaggeration. (OK, maybe eight dozen is an exaggeration.)

The inclusion of online play over Xbox Live was supposed to set *Inside Pitch* apart from all the other games on the market. But considering how deeply flawed the underlying gameplay is, who on Earth would want to share the experience with a friend?

For starters, the pitcher/batter interface is shallower than Bank One Ballpark's swimming pool. Pitchers have a maximum of four pitches. The strike zone is divided into nine selectable zones, making painting the corner impossible. Batting is so simple, it's almost impossible not to make solid contact on any pitch over the plate.

Defense proves problematic, too (as it seems to be in almost every game this year), with hard-to-control players and a lack of offscreen indicators. You can pull off big moves like dives and over-the-wall catches, but that's assuming you can actually get to the ball in the first place.

Season play leaves something to be desired, although a pretty interesting Challenge mode puts you in well-known scenarios that allow you to gain points by surpassing famous feats, like Nomar's three-homer 29th birthday.

Because it's on Xbox, you would expect top-notch graphics, but other than some decent face modeling, everything in the game—from the player models to the stadiums—looks bland. Overall, *Inside Pitch* lacks just about any sense of baseball spirit.

_Tom Price

PUB	MICROSOFT	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	STUDIO GIGANTE	PLAYERS	1-2
REL	MARCH 2003	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR WHIFF 5/10

BETTER THAN: MLB 2004
NOT AS GOOD AS: ANY OTHER BASEBALL GAME W. IT FOR IT: THE ALL-STAR BREAK













MAGIC PENGEL: TQFC
TRY COLORING INSIDE THE LINES

EVERYONE | PS2

Magic Pengel's world is ruled by an oppressive tyrant who controls and taxes color use, much to the dismay of his artistically inclined subjects. Living by the pen-is-mightier-than-the-sword principle, they plan to shed themselves of monarchical rule by drawing an army of creatures (a do-it-yourself take on _Pokémon_). Political and religious undertones aside, _Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color_ doesn't pretend to have any deep narrative; sadly, it doesn't have anything else deep, either.

The game's main appeal is in creating your own characters with a basic illustration program. Your characters' battle statistics and attributes depend on the size and color of body parts, which sounds like the perfect opportunity for your imagination to run wild, unless you want lots of HP (green body parts) or high agility (big legs). It's hardly a full version of *Adobe Illustrator*, but *Pengel*'s doodle interface, designed by programmers at Tokyo University, is adequately functional, with plenty of colors, brushes, and animations to choose from.

But when you take your twisted (or boring) creations to the battlefield, *Pengel* loses its magic. The battle system is more or less based on the rock-paper-scissors rules. The fact that you can't choose the same option on consecutive turns (thus planning your action based on what your opponent can't do) adds a layer of strategy, but it's mostly based on dumb luck. Dueling is more fun against other humans, but it's still flawed.

If only the battle system were as imaginative as the character creation, *Magic Pengel* would be one of those quirky and lovable games everyone looks back upon fondly. As it stands, it's just quirky.

_Andrew Pfister

PUB AGETEC
DEV TAITO
REL APRIL 2003
PRICE $29.99
PLAYERS 1-2
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR CHILD'S PLAY 6/10

BETTER THAN: A BOX OF CRAYOLAS
NOT AS GOOD AS: POKÉMON RUBY OR SAPPHIRE
WAIT FOR IT: MONSTER RANCHER 4

LOST KINGDOMS II
A LOADED DECK

TEEN | GC

Activision's card-based RPG (CardPG?) _Lost Kingdoms II_ is set some 200 years after the original game. While it improves on _Lost Kingdom_'s play, those improvements are slight: There are new monster cards to huck at enemies and a special Card Transformational ability that lets heroine Tara Grimface morph into a creature in order to attack foes or solve simple puzzles.

As Grimface explores the near-wrecked Kingdom of Argwyll, she'll live or die by her deck. Players can summon monsters from a hand of four cards, each mapped to a button on the GameCube controller's face. Normally, monsters do all the fighting, but Grimface can also use special-attack cards to strike her foes, or can even transform herself into something funky and enter combat. But this is where the game begins to break down; the monster animations are dull, so watching two beasts brawl is exciting enough to induce insomniacs into slumber. Plus, players are forced to hover near battles, taking damage all the while, in an attempt to collect magic-restoring crystals. As you might gather, a routine like this quickly becomes tedious.

Since you need to use a different monster in almost every battle, it's easy to run out of cards, too. If this happens, Grimface is as doomed as a cheeseburger at a Weight Watchers meeting. Players can add new cards to their deck only at a save point, and there's just one save point per level. It's a delicious recipe for frustration.

A poor camera system forces players to constantly readjust their view, which is annoying, certainly, but becomes seriously problematic later in the game, when Grimface must avoid alarm searchlights and unseen foes who can do her serious damage with one swipe. While the first game showed great potential, *Lost Kingdom II* loses a lot in the shuffle.

_Greg Orlando









PUB FROM SOFTWARE
DEV ACTIVISION
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE $49.99
PLAYERS 1-2
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR DISCARDABLE 5/10

BETTER THAN: DIGIMON CARD BATTLE
NOT AS GOOD AS: TETRA MASTER (FFIX)
WAIT FOR IT: CHAOS LEGION

XB
PS2
GC

IL2 STURMOVIK: FB
BOGEY ON YOUR SIX

EVERYONE | PC





GMR ESSENTIAL SELECTION



***IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles* is the best WWII flight sim available, even if its Eastern Front setting showcases aircraft unfamiliar to the average player (e.g., Yaks and Sturmoviks). It's a hardcore simmer's delight, with superb flight physics and enough detail to please the most finicky realism fanatics, including minutiae such as adjustable fuel mixtures and radiator controls.**

Attention to detail isn't the game's only impressive feature: The sun rising over a Russian forest's deep snow, the light glinting off a river running through a large city, and the lightning flashing as you fly through threatening thunderclouds all make this as pretty a sim as you'll find. Also, multiplayer is solid and robust, and *Forgotten Battles* addresses the one major complaint leveled at its predecessor by including a dynamic campaign.

And while hardcore simmers will love this game, it is decidedly rough on novices. Toggles provide a way to tone down the difficulty, but some features that will attract the hardcore will frustrate a newbie; the A.I. gunnery is incredibly deadly, configuring keyboard and joystick commands takes a lot of time, and the padlock's attempt to be realistic just flat-out sucks.

Newbie caveats aside, *Forgotten Battles* has what it takes to become a classic. If you have any interest in combat flight sims, this is a must-buy.

_Jeff Lackey

PUB	UBI SOFT	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	1C:MADDOX GAMES	PLAYERS	1-32
REL	AAVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	RUSSIA

GMR ACE COMBAT 9/10

BETTER THAN: EVERY OTHER WWII FLIGHT SIM
NOT AS GOOD AS: TWIN PROP ENGINES
WAIT FOR IT: 1C:MADDOX'S TOP-SECRET GAME

PC

MASTERS OF ORION 3
YES, THAT IS A SCREENSHOT

TEEN | PC

***Master of Orion* 3 is an obsessively detailed space strategy game promising "unequaled galactic adventures" that will "guarantee your place in the annals of space and time." We're not sure where these annals of space and time are kept, but if we ever find them and they turn out to have an ass, somebody's going to have an unequaled galactic adventure trying to remove the *MOO3* box from it.**

We're going to cover the game's giant list of flaws sort of briefly, because we want to save room for more threats at the end of the review. *MOO3* is essentially a game about reading reports in a cubicle in outer space.

Nobody expects it to have great graphics, but *MOO3* can't even get it together enough to use a decent font. Any attempt to read the game's blurry text is guaranteed to result in an unequaled galactic headache. Then there's the weak, arbitrary enemy A.I., the impenetrable interface, and the absurdly incomplete documentation. Most interesting gameplay decisions are made by recalcitrant, virtually uncontrollable A.I. assistants, leaving you in the role of Supreme Commander of the Next Turn Button. The spaceship battles are depicted as wars between multicolored dots. Fun? Not fun.

_Erik Wolpaw



PUB	INFOGRAMES	PRICE	$49.95
DEV	QUICKSILVER	PLAYERS	1-8
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR WTF 1/10

BETTER THAN: ANYTHING ELSE, REALLY
NOT AS GOOD AS: YOUR BORING JOB
WAIT FOR IT: GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS

PRAETORIANS
LEADING THE LEGIONS OF CAESAR

TEEN | PC

In *Praetorians*, Eidos' new real-time strategy, you relive Rome's glory days by leading her legions through Britain and Egypt.

Too bad it's not nearly as exciting as it sounds. You begin most battles with only a few units, so you must conquer a village and sap its population to train more. Recruiting is slow, though, so you'll spend most of your time waiting instead of fighting. When battles do occur, they usually turn into confused melees. Many missions are linear and require too much wandering through mazelike forests.

Still, for all the meandering, *Praetorians* actually does a lot right, delivering good graphics, fun sieges, and several multiplayer options. Meaning, that if you have a soft spot for anything Roman, are feeling particularly Caesarish, or simply want to make like Russell Crowe for a day, it's worth a look.

_Di Luo

PUB	EIDOS INTERACTIVE	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	PYRO STUDIOS	PLAYERS	1-8
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR MARCHING BAND 6/10

BETTER THAN: LEGION
NOT AS GOOD AS: STARCRAFT
WAIT FOR IT: ROME: TOTAL WAR

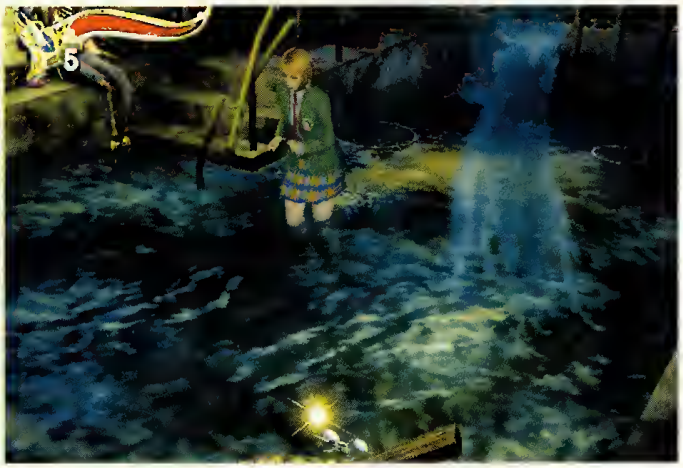




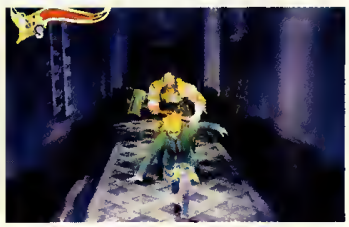












→ An example of *Clock Tower 3*'s mind-bending puzzles: The skeleton at the upper left needs his glasses back. A pair of glasses are sitting on the trash heap four feet away (see glowing object)....hmmm, what to do, what to do ...

CLOCK TOWER 3

SURVIVAL AND HORROR, BUT NOT SURVIVAL-HORROR

TEEN | PS2

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: SUNSOFT/CAPCOM
PRICE: $49.99
RELEASE: APRIL 2003
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: JAPAN

Like Tecmo's ghost-photography thriller *Fatal Frame*, *Clock Tower 3* has the kind of creepy, bizarre premise that could only have come out of Japan. You play a 15-year-old schoolgirl (naturally) with supernatural powers (check) whose destiny lies in battling demons (anime fans, sound familiar?).

But unlike, say, *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill*, you only rarely actually fight the bad guys in *Clock Tower*. Instead, you spend most of the game running—running to grab a key, running to flip a switch, running from the homicidal maniacs constantly chasing you, running, running, running. When you do finally stay put for a boss encounter, the game briefly becomes a limited shooter of sorts, as your heroine whips out a magic bow and binds the spirits of the psychos chasing after her with mystical arrows of power. (My Little Pony and Hello Kitty special-effects are, sadly, not included.) These brief spurts of action are entertaining, but between them lie only painfully simple puzzles and, as previously mentioned, lots of running around, avoiding your idiotic pursuers with the same tricks again and again. The Artist Yet Again Known as Prince once sang of "Joy In Repetition," but the repetition in *Clock Tower 3* isn't quite so joyous.

It isn't nearly as bad as it sounds, thanks to decent graphics and especially to *Clock Tower 3*'s brutally violent plot. Parts of this game are so over-the-top (take the sledgehammer smashing into a 12-year-old girl's head, or the mother-and-son acid bath), you'll find yourself cringing and giggling at the same time—the very definition of a guilty pleasure. These cut-scenes, along with a couple unexpected story twists near the end, at least give those interested in the genre enough reason to play through the game's paltry six or so hours.

_Mark MacDonald

GMR HAMMER TIME **6/10**

BETTER THAN: CLOCK TOWER 1 & 2
NOT AS GOOD AS: FATAL FRAME
WAIT IT FOR IT: RESIDENT EVIL ONLINE

2ND. OPINION

I think I like *Clock Tower 3* slightly more than Mark does mostly because I hated the first two games. But with bodacious next-gen graphics and a surprising willingness to showcase some brutal stuff, *CT3* gains ballsy points in my book. OK, so a magic bow is no substitute for a rocket launcher, but hey.

_James Mielke

PS2



SONIC ADVENTURE DX
BLUE BLUR REDUX

EVERYONE | GC

When the cash cow stops producing sweet, sweet dollars and instead begins to smoke from its udders, it's time to release a director's cut. At worst, the director's cut is an insult. At best, it's *Sonic Adventure DX: Director's Cut*.

Sega originally released *Sonic Adventure* for the ill-fated Dreamcast, and it marked the first 3D rendering of videogame icon Sonic the Hedgehog . Flawed but ultimately breathless and good fun, *Adventure* was one of the best titles Dreamcast had to offer. Now in the 21st century and running on GameCube, it holds up remarkably well, although its Dreamcast wrinkles—notably, a lackluster framerate, some in-game stuttering, and a flaky camera—have not been completely ironed out.

For those unfortunate enough to have been asleep or perhaps sans console when the game first saw release, *Adventure* goes balls-out with crazy perspectives and stunning vistas, sending the heroic hedgehog racing across twisting, inverted platforms and plummeting down blue-gray slopes on a snowboard. It presents multiple playable characters, a neat animal breeding/racing feature, and a great homage to the classic Sega Saturn game *Nights*.

The game alone is worth the price of admission, but this version features an all-new Mission mode that, while fluff, is nonetheless fun, plus 12 entirely cool *Sonic* games taken warts and all from the Sega Game Gear. I'm

_Greg Orlando

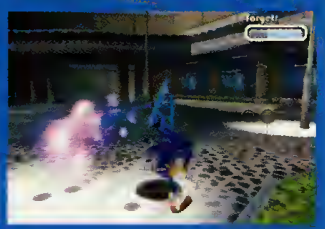
PUB	SEGA	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	SONIC TEAM	PLAYERS	1
REL	JUNE 2003	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR PRO KEDS 7/10

BETTER THAN: CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX
WORSE THAN: MARIO SUNSHINE
WAIT FOR IT: JAK II









MEGA MAN NET TRANS
RUN FRUSTRATION.EXE

EVERYONE | GC

With the *Battle Network* series, Capcom re-energized a *Mega Man* franchise that was beginning to get rather stale. Courtesy of Arika (*Street Fighter EX*), the cyber motif of the portable games gets translated into a platformer with old-school *Mega Man* flavor. Alas, some finer aspects of the portables are lost in the conversion.

In the GBA games, your chips would be replenished after each random battle. But in *Transmission*, they're not resupplied until you jack out of the level and re-enter it, so in order to clear a stage successfully, you'll need to be near perfect—a feat that's possible only through trial-and-error (read: dying a lot). The scarcity and randomness of the chips becomes less of a problem later in the game when Mega Man is powered up and your chip library is more robust, but the initial lack of firepower creates a balance problem. Take Quick Man, for instance—true to his name, he'll make it tough to counter his speed, boomerangs, and relentless Dash attacks with your slow Mini Bomb and weak Cannon. And since he's an early boss, you won't have many chips yet. In short, if you don't get him on the first try, you're out of luck. That's not to say *Mega Man* games shouldn't be challenging endeavors, but screwing up in *Transmission* isn't always your fault.

The overall presentation of the game is a mixed bag. The concept of jacking into a cyberworld with Mega Man & Co. works incredibly well, and the cel-shading is surprisingly appropriate. But the levels themselves are quite boring, full of repetitive tiles, bland backgrounds, and lots of stationary enemies.

With a less-frustrating difficulty level, revamped weapons system, and a graphical look that wasn't so...dull, *Transmission* could have been very good. *Mega Man* fans will certainly find it enjoyable, but the random nature of the battle chips makes this a franchise that, for now, is better suited for the GBA. I'm

_Andrew Pfister

PUB	CAPCOM	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	ARIKA	PLAYERS	1
REL	JUNE 2003	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR DUCK 6/10

BETTER THAN: EVOLUTION WORLDS
NOT AS GOOD AS: MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK
WAIT FOR IT: WARIO WORLD

[SON OF A GLITCH]

Why is *Transmission* so difficult? Timing. After 15 years of dashing around and jumping on platforms, Mega Man still isn't athletic enough to crouch. To avoid incoming fire, you'll have to slide under or jump over it (good luck). If you don't make your move within the small window of time, it's deletion city for our e-Hero. And please, don't get us started on Quick Man.

.hack//MUTATION

WELCOME TO THE WORLD, EA, AGAIN

TEEN | PS2

Here we are again, just a few months after we reviewed the first title in this trippy franchise, and we've already got *Mutation* in our hands. Some of you are wondering why it's here so soon. Others are eager to know if the second *.hack* chapter fixes the problems we had with the first game. Well, hold your Grunties—we've got your answers.

For all you n00bs, here's the dilly on *.hack*: It's a true-blue series, with each of the four chapters picking up exactly where the last left off. You can carry over your saves from the prior games, retaining your levels, your equipment, and your relationships (more on that later). If you're intrigued by the notion of a massively multiplayer online RPG that's neither multiplayer nor online, then don't start with *Mutation*—you must play *Infection* first.

If you've played *Infection*, then you're likely wondering if the game gets any better. The answer: yep, most definitely. The biggest problem with the first chapter was the time spent learning the intricacies of the game, leading to loads of frustrating deaths. This time around, you're already leveled up and you know what's going on, which makes all the difference.

Even though it's more of the same, the battles are more fun, too. The foes are tougher, but you're better prepared. Strategy plays a huge role in combat, forcing you to constantly readjust by shouting out commands to your comrades. And the boss battles are spectacular. I only wish there were a few more of these brilliant encounters.

The best thing about *Mutation*? We keep stumbling onto funky new aspects the more we play it—like the fact that your relationships with your pals in this faux-MMORPG depend on the time you spend with them and the gifts you give them. Just like in real life.

_ Gary Steinman

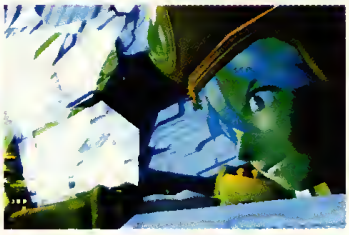
PUB	BANDAI	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	CYBERCONNECT	PLAYERS	1
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR — WHO NEEDS FRIENDS — 8/10

BETTER THAN: EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES
NOT AS GOOD AS: PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
WAIT FOR IT: FINAL FANTASY XI







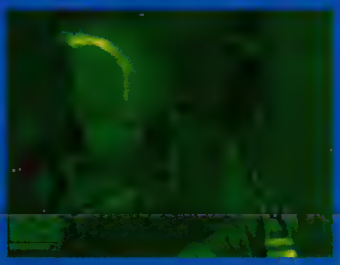
[DON'T DRAG ON DATA DRAIN]

Be sure to use your Data Drain ability wisely. Every time you Drain a foe, you get closer to unlocking another Book of Ryu. Each Book is the key to unlocking tons of extra goodies, like cinemas, desktop patterns, music and more, so check them often. Just don't go overboard, or you risk suffering all kinds of bad effects from virus overload. Eventually, though, you'll

PC
PS2







BLACK HAWK DOWN

WAR AS HELL

TEEN | PC

Wherever you stand on what's going on in the world right now, there's one thing very few people—in the military or in the civilian sectors—would disagree with: War is hell. *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, for all its eerie similarities to current events, effectively conveys the emotional elements of war, but as a true-to-life war game, it falters.

Based on the movie, which was based on the powerful book, *DFBHD* succeeds as a powerful game. The plot expands to Delta Force missions in and around Mogadishu that are historically plausible: things like protecting UN food distributors, escorting columns of supplies, etc. The civilian element adds a realistic dimension to the game, since the people you must protect look a lot like the people trying to kill you.

Graphics are top notch and effects like night vision are well done, but too many times, gameplay is reduced to manning turrets on choppers and jeeps in mindless rail-shooting stretches. And even when you're executing missions on foot, most levels are just linear shooting galleries.

All the atmosphere of war is here—the confusion and fear—but beyond that, *DFBHD* doesn't involve much more than mowing down hordes of mindless enemy drones. Turn on CNN and you'll see that it's far more complicated than that.

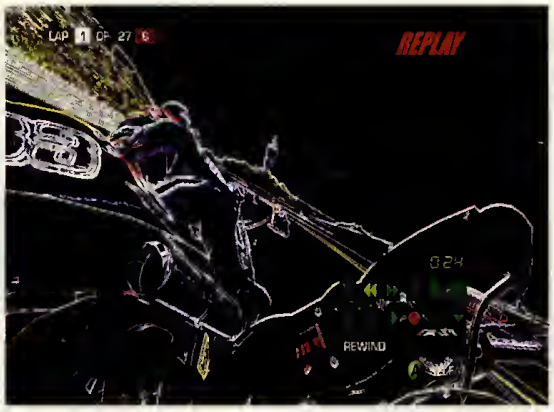
_ Tom Price

PUB	NOVALOGIC	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	NOVALOGIC	PLAYERS	1-50
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR — LOW ON AMMO — 7/10

BETTER THAN: CONFLICT DESERT STORM
NOT AS GOOD AS: MEDAL OF HONOR
WAIT FOR IT: RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN





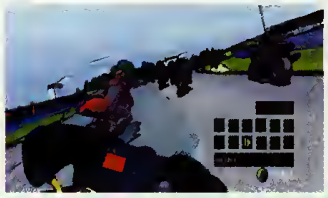




→ If you play *Moto GP3* for PS2 using the cockpit view, enjoy eating that wall. The view is pretty, but nearly unplayable. In *GP2* for Xbox, this view (above) is more than playable—it's the best way to feel the speed (and fear) of riding a real race bike.

[YOU'RE MOTORIN']

Visually, *MotoGP 2* stacks up right alongside Namco's PS2-only *MotoGP 3*. Although *GP 2*'s framerate may not be as crisp, and its colors more subdued, but what Climax's game lacks in superfluous flash, it makes up for in meticulously modeled and animated riders (watch them left-foot-shift gears) and trackside realism. The customary Replay mode, in combination with any number of the game's graphical filters (toon, sketch, wireframe, etc.), makes watching replays nearly as fun as playing the game iself. For real. Even if you completely suck at playing *MotoGP 2*, the Replay mode can make even the most inept riders look good.



MOTO GP2

WHAT'S YOUR PRICE FOR FLIGHT?

TEEN | XBOX [REVIEWED] | PC

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: CLIMAX
PRICE: $49.99
RELEASE: MAY 2003
PLAYERS: 1-4 (2-16 ONLINE)
ORIGIN: U.K.

Know this: Even if you have enough skrilla (that's cash in English) to roll with the top down and a hottie riding shotgun in a BMW Z8, *you don't know speed*. When stacked next to a Suzuki GSX-R 750 at a stop light, it is preordained that, come green, your Z8 will be smoked.

Speed and maneuverability: That's what motorcycles are about, and *MotoGP 2* captures them well. Building on *MotoGP*, last year's sterling effort, THQ and Climax have returned with a game that can only be described as the best motorcycling sim on the planet.

Why? To begin with, the control (very key) is essentially perfect. Whether you're comfortable with the arcadey unibrake or the more accurate response of the dual brakes, both—in conjunction with the spot-on analog control—make *MotoGP 2*'s cycles dip and weave like real racing bikes. Dipping into the bends and powering out is user-friendly without compromising realism. Unlike other cycle games, which give the impression that motorcycles drive only in straight lines, *MotoGP 2* provides all the dexterous physics of a real-life bike, and the electrifying, white-knuckle experience that comes with them.

Although the game sticks to the *MotoGP* format (sorry, no Harleys and no Vespas), making your way through the full 16-course circuit is a blast. Mastering each track's detailed nuances (like Barcelona's sexy Circuit de Catalunya) quickly becomes an obsession, especially when you climb online for a 16-player showdown.

With an expanded Create-a-Rider mode (perfect for putting the virtual you in the saddle), an improved selection of bikes, a host of unlockable bonuses, a challenging Stunt mode, and lifelike graphics, *MotoGP 2* is, without a doubt, a contender for racing game of the year.

_James Mielke

GMR ROCKET MAN 9/10

BETTER THAN RIDING SPIRITS
NOT AS GOOD AS A DUCATI 999R IN THE GARAGE
WAIT IT FOR IT: MILKY TO GET NEW WHEELS

2ND. OPINION

Every time I load up this game, it rocks my face. *Moto GP2* makes busting stoppies and taking hairpins at 75mph look so easy. I think I could pull that stuff off in real life. Of course, in reality my brains would end up smeared on the pavement like Nutella on toast, but a boy can dream.

_Tom Price



MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

AN OLDIE BUT STILL GOODIE...ALMOST

TEEN | XBOX

If you grew up with Capcom's *Street Fighter* games, you'll be psyched when you you see what 3D has done for this updated Xbox version, *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*.

Players pick a team of three characters from the Marvel or Capcom universes, then tag their team in and out of a battle more chaotic than the opening scene of *Gladiator*. There are more than fifty characters to choose from, and it's possible to have a battle royal with six of the same character (see *GMR #4*, More) for a nearly infinite number of matches. Fighters range from staples of each pantheon, like Ryu and the Incredible Hulk, to more obscure characters like SonSon and Marrow. Players use preprogrammed air combos, super moves, and team supers to crush their opponents, and fighters who aren't currently in the brawl slowly recover health.

The game shows its age graphically, as even the Dreamcast version supported sharper sprites than the mighty Xbox iteration, and seeing 3D backgrounds behind 2D characters is somewhat jarring. In fact, the animations have changed very little in the decade since Capcom unleashed its monster on the world, and the sound effects are the same as they ever were. The gameplay is razor sharp, and players will find that it's a snap to control their characters.

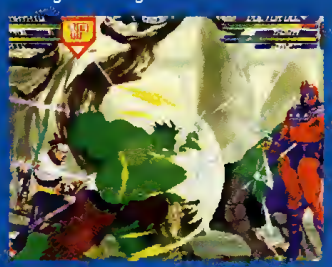
While *Marvel vs. Capcom* is a flawless port, it's nothing more than a port. Updated features Capcom has since developed, like the EO system for newbies in *Capcom vs. SNK 2*, are nowhere to be found. And what would have been the game's ultimate saving grace—infinite human opponents online, courtesy of Xbox Live—isn't available either.

_James Mielke

PUB	CAPCOM	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	CAPCOM	PLAYERS	2
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR MACHO 7/10

BETTER THAN: MARVEL VS. CAPCOM
NOT AS GOOD AS: CAPCOM VS. SNK 2: EO
WAIT FOR IT: SNK VS. CAPCOM (NEO-GEO)





GALLOP RACER 2003

WIN, PLACE, OR A SHOW

EVERYONE | PS2



If you're a big enough horse-racing nut to appreciate the level of detail in this hardcore racehorse simulator, then you're probably down at the track right now, betting the baby-food money on a 20-to-1 long shot. *Gallop Racer* simulates every aspect of owning and racing a Thoroughbred, from managing the breeding paddock to exercising your reflexes out of the gate. The game may be too complicated and difficult for most, but you've got to appreciate its dedication to realism and great graphics. Minus the poop.

_Tom Price

PUB	TECMO	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	TECMO	PLAYERS	1-2
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR WHOA, NELLY 7/10

BETTER THAN: A PONY RIDE
NOT AS GOOD AS: HITTING THE TRIFECTA
WAIT FOR IT: G1 JOCKEY 3

CONFLICT DESERT STORM

NO WOMEN, NO KIDS

TEEN | GC



He who did not watch history broadcast live on CNN should be doomed to repeat it on the GameCube. Strategy-laden and real enough to be creepy, *Conflict Desert Storm* puts players in control of a four-man squad as it battles against Iraqi forces in Kuwait, on the Saudi Arabian border, and in Iraq itself. *Storm* requires precise placement of supporting forces, which is difficult, given the game's clunky command scheme. Players will find themselves replaying missions again and again because, as in real war, life is cheap and death is all too common.

_Greg Orlando

PUB	PIVOTAL GAMES	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	GOTHAM GAMES	PLAYERS	1
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR CARPET BOMB 6/10

BETTER THAN: ARMY MEN: SARGE'S WAR
NOT AS GOOD AS: TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON
WAIT FOR IT: TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER

ARMY MEN: SARGE'S WAR

COUAT MAATIAL

TEEN | GC



ATTEN-hut! Sergeant Hawk, you stand accused of leading a very mediocre *Army Men* game into battle. Your crimes include enlisting a camera that's strictly Section 8; wasting taxpayers' money with uninspired levels, weapons, and challenges; and employing an all-too-convenient auto-aiming system that, as any maggot knows, is basic training 101. We charge you with not asking but rather telling your audience what it wanted: bomb-collection out the wazoo, a grim but bland story line, and everything old packaged as if it were new. You sir, are dis-MISSED!

_Greg Orlando

PUB	3DO	PRICE	$49.99
DEV	3DO	PLAYERS	1-4
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR LEATHERNECK 4/10

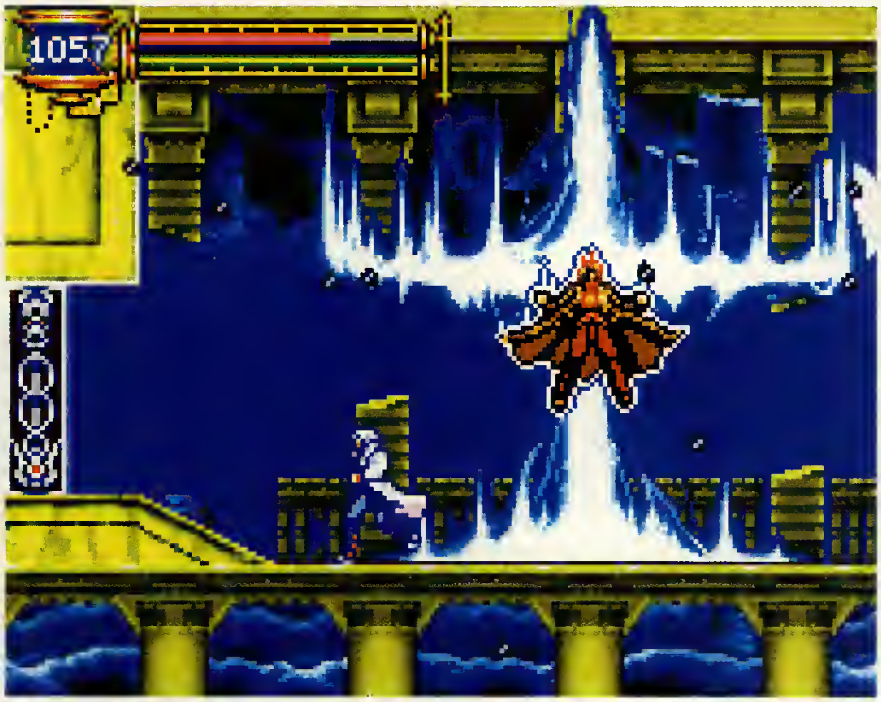
BETTER THAN: ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES
WORSE THAN: MELTED ARMY MEN
WAIT FOR IT: FREEDOM. THE BATTLE FOR LIBERTY ISLAND

XB
PS2
GC



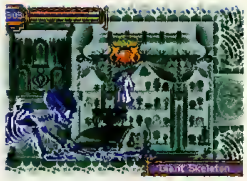
GBA REVIEWS

WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS. CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S TOWERING CUMULUS OF PORTABLE VIDEOGAMES. WETTY!









→ *Aria of Sorrow* is set in 2035, but you'd never know it from the crumbling Gothic setting of *Aria*'s castle. The future never looked so bleak, especially when you're running through icy underground caverns filled with bats and surly plant-monsters.

CASTLEVANIA: ARIA

TAKE YOUR COAT OFF. STAY A WHILE

TEEN | GBA

Since the 1997 release of *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, gamers have craved more of the *Metroid*-esque vampire-hunting action that *Symphony* did so well. Despite some forgettable experiences on the N64, any *Castlevania* fan with a GBA knows that we've had it pretty good with *Circle of the Moon* and *Harmony of Dissonance*. *Aria of Sorrow* is equally impressive.

This time around, the main character is not a Belmont— it's Soma Cruz, a high-school student trying to escape from the castle he's trapped in. The year is 2035.

The game begins with a few plot-setting conversations, but you're quickly thrust into yet another excellent sword-swinging platform-adventure. As in every 2D *Castlevania* in the post-*Symphony* era, *Aria* boasts a new power-up mechanism; this time, it's called the soul system. Soma can absorb the souls and abilities of the monsters he encounters and kills, turning their own attacks against them. Each of the game's unique enemies has its own particular weakness, so this large arsenal of attacks (over 100 are available) can be handy. The game is easily beaten using a mere handful of these skills, rendering the need for so many cool powers somewhat moot, but finding all of the souls is tough work, making the link-up soul-trading system particularly valuable.

Although *Aria* is a swiftly beaten affair, Konami has built in multiple endings, extra playable characters, and bonus modes to make revisits worthwhile. But for all its finesse, and razor-sharp control, *Aria* comes so quickly on the heels of its predecessor that one can't help but feel a significant sense of déjà vu. If *Harmony* was dinner, then *Aria* is surely dessert: short, sweet, and to the point. Not bad if you don't mind too much of a good thing.

_James Mielke

PUB	KONAMI	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	KONAMI	PLAYERS	1-2
REL	APRIL 2003	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR BLOOOSHOT 8/10

BETTER THAN: RAYMAN 3 (GBA)
NOT AS GOOO AS: METROID FUSION
JUST IN TIME FOR: THE GAME BOY PLAYER



MEDABOTS: METABEE
MAKES A GOOD SCREENSAVER

EVERYONE | GBA

Based on the popular animated television show in which kids customize robots and battle their friends, *Medabots* is a cross between *Final Fantasy* and *Mega Man*. Players control a boy named Ikki, build robots out of four pieces (two arms, feet, and a head), and bring them to life with a medal. Certain parts work better with certain medals, so finding the right balance to create a successful warrior plays a large part in the game. Quests involve fighting ghosts and stopping the evil Rubberobo gang from tickling girls

Unfortunately, the game is innately flawed. Regardless of the number of robotic combatants in a battle, one Medabot is dubbed the Leader. When the Leader ceases to function, the fight is over. Because of this gameplay quirk, players are unable to target a specific robot to attack; attacks hit opponents at random (though some robots inherently target others). Any sense of strategy is lost, and an RPG's most compelling aspect—absolute control over a battle—simply doesn't exist.

Natsume has gone so far as to let players create automatic strategy macros. By choosing "auto," Medabots will go through a preprogrammed set of moves. The game's manual even includes a sentence instructing players to save their game frequently to avoid losing "hours of work—er, play."





The graphics are run-of-the-mill, and the sound seems to have been taken straight from *Mega Man X*. Controls are tight and the menus are intuitive, but with games like *Pokémon* on the market, there's little reason to recommend this one.

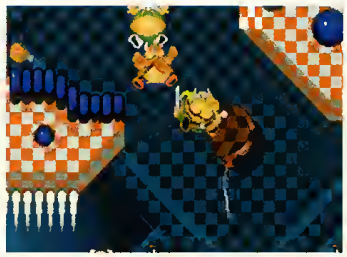
_Doug Trueman

PUB	NATSUME	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	NATSUME	PLAYERS	1-2 (VIA GBA LINK)
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR BOTTLED 5/10

BETTER THAN: BATTLEBOTS: BEYOND THE BATTLEBOX
NOT AS GOOD AS: POKEMON SAPPHIRE
WAIT FOR IT: ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING





LOST VIKINGS
HOW MANY VIKINGS DOES IT TAKE...

EVERYONE | GBA

Before *WarCraft* and *StarCraft* made Blizzard a household name, the company released a 16-bit sleeper hit called *The Lost Vikings*, a game that gave the world reason to say, "Hey, maybe these guys know a little something about strategy games." The premise is simple enough: Erik the Swift, Olaf the Stout, and Baleog the Fierce have been abducted by the alien zookeeper Tomator, who wants to put them on display like animals. If our historical memory serves us correctly, the Vikings were people not particularly keen on incarceration, and this trio is no exception.

Surviving the 35 levels depends on how well you use the Vikings' different abilities, balancing and combining defense, attack, and mobility. The instances in which you need to mix abilities in order to progress past enemies or obstacles (e.g., using Olaf's shield as a platform for Erik to jump from) provide some of the better moments in the game. To clear the level, you have to guide all three to the end—a challenging task when there are plenty of one-hit deaths.

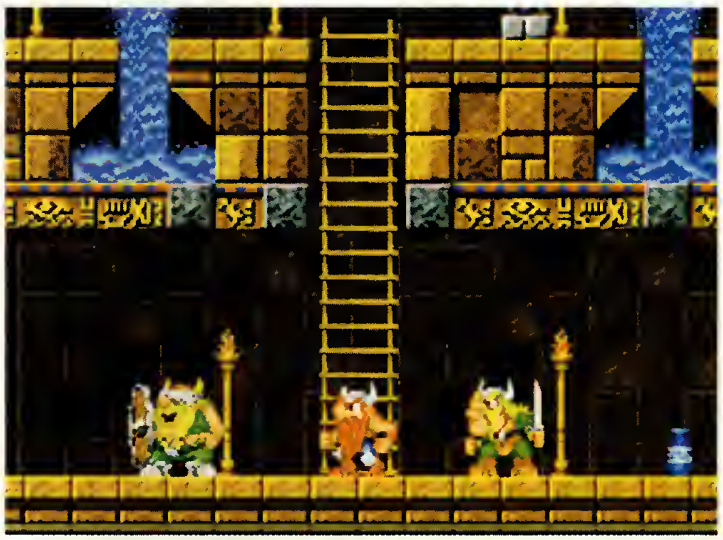
For a game that's more than a decade old, *The Lost Vikings* looks and plays great. It's got a sharp and witty sense of humor, right down to the character profiles in the instruction manual. The only problem is that once you finish it, there's not much incentive to pick it up again—the lack of enhancements and bonus material is disappointing. But if you're looking for an entertaining diversion on the bus ride home, or a chance to explore Blizzard's console roots, you could do a lot worse than this.

_Andrew Pfister

PUB	BLIZZARD	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	MASS MEDIA	PLAYERS	1
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR NORDIC FER SHER 7/10

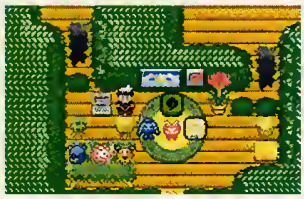
BETTER THAN: THREE DIRTY DWARVES (SATURN)
ON PAR WITH: LEMMINGS (SNES)
WAIT FOR IT: ROCK 'N ROLL RACING















→ *Ruby* and *Sapphire* mark a fresh start for the series. You can't trade with the older games and you can't go to Kanto or Johto, so some old Pokémon don't exist in the game at all.

GBA

POKEMON: RUBY & SAPPHIRE

A FAESH COAT OF PAINT, BUT A NOT-SO-FAESH FEELING

EVERYONE | GBA

At the heart of the *Pokémon* fad that swept the nation three years ago (has it really been that long?) were solid, innovative, fun videogames. Now that the craze is over and the kids have moved on, the latest installments have arrived without fanfare. Is it worth retreading the same path or can we consign *Pokémon* to the annals of history?

The formula is, after all, pretty familiar by now: Kid is given choice of three *Pokémon* (grass, fire, or water) by benevolent town professor and embarks on journey to win eight Gym Badges. Along the way, kid thwarts the evil intentions of a bumbling criminal gang, and catches a host of legendary *Pokémon* while being tracked by a rival from the same town. *Ruby* and *Sapphire* stick to the script—there are few surprises here. Yes, the world is all new, and yes, there are 100 new Pokémon, but it's still basically the same game.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that. Training a team of your very own Pokémon to take on trainers scattered around the world is as engaging as ever, as is the challenge of actually trying to catch 'em all. Nonetheless, it's starting to get old (the graphics don't make much of an advanced leap either), so improvements in the form of optional two-on-two battles—which add a significant dose of strategy to the simplistic fights—are more than welcome.

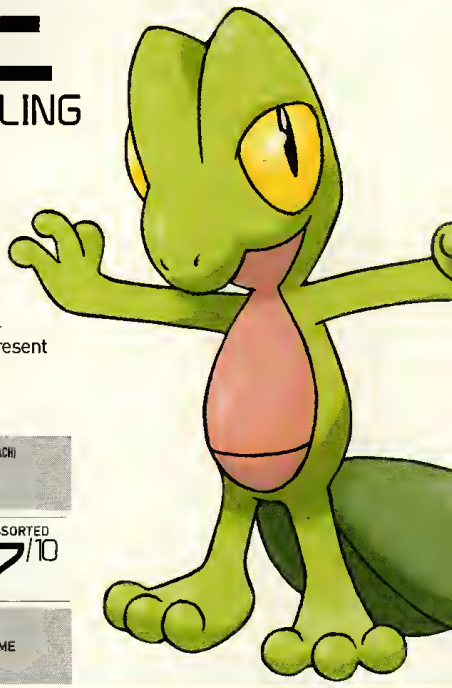
It's curious and frustrating, then, to see such an element criminally underused throughout the game—especially given that the other big addition, Beauty Contests, are fairly pointless affairs. What you're left with is the same *Pokémon* framework with a slightly new game pasted in. Still fun, if you can handle the ever-present feeling of déjà vu.

_Ravi Hiranand

PUB NINTENDO
DEV NINTENDO
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE $34.99 (EACH)
PLAYERS 1-4
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR ASSORTED 7/10

BETTER THAN: YU-GI-OH!
NOT AS GOOD AS: POKÉMON, THE FIRST TIME
BEST STARTER MON: TORCHIC, BABY

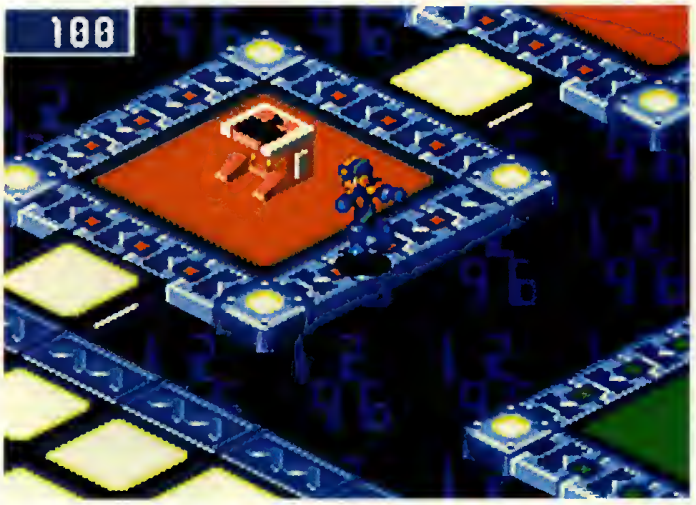


MEGA MAN NETWORK 3
DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO

EVERYONE | GBA







For those of you who still haven't jumped on the *Battle Network* bandwagon, here's a quick summary: Lan and his schoolyard chums use their PDAs to jack into "the network," where they guide Navi programs that take the form of Mega Man and other classic franchise characters. Random battles occur on a 3-by-6 grid, and *Mega Man* fights with special battle chips (as well as his traditional blaster). The first two games were an excellent and refreshing new take on the *Mega Man* franchise, and thanks to some new changes, the latest game (two versions, actually, *Blue* and *White*) is no exception.

There are more chips, new boss Navis, and the style system has some added depth, but the best new feature is the NaviCust program, which replaces the usual Mega Man power-ups. Mega Man will now gain and lose abilities depending on how you arrange your custom chips—if you run NaviCust with the chips in the wrong places, you'll get glitches in the program and MegaMan.exe won't function correctly in battle.

To a certain extent, it's more of the same, but there are plenty of new and interesting additions to justify completing the *Battle Network* trilogy (though we question the necessity of breaking it into the *Blue* and *White* versions). If *Battle Network 2* was a tasty burrito, *Battle Network 3* is a tasty burrito stuffed inside a larger, tastier burrito. _ Andrew Pfister

PUB CAPCOM
DEV CAPCOM
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE $29.99 (each)
PLAYERS 1-2
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR ALL ACCESS 8/10

ON A PAR WITH: LUNAR LEGEND
NOT AS GOOD AS: ZELDA: LINK TO THE PAST
WAIT FOR IT: FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE







SPLINTER CELL
PATRIOT'S GAME

TEEN | GBA

Ah, the zip line. Twenty years ago, it was the domain of *Elevator Action*; now, it's just one more trick in Sam Fisher's considerable repertoire. Ubi Soft's superb *Splinter Cell* has handheld, featuring the flavor of both its console cousin(s) and the arcade classic with gorgeous graphics and impressive audio to match. And yet, the result, is sadly lacking.

Nine missions (plus training) find the stealthy super-spy slinking and scrolling from side to side across the globe. This being a Tom Clancy joint, the game's scenario is suitably (and uncomfortably) evocative of the real world of agencies, assassinations, and nuclear arsenals. The game's missions stay true to their roots: infiltrate, hide, cold-cock, and generally put Sam's NSA training (and U.S. tax dollars) to good use. But the (necessary) loss of depth is problematic, especially when the game's trying to capture the look and feel of its 3D counterpart. Subterfuge is a tense thrill in three dimensions, but it can be tiring in two.

Controls suffer similarly: Sam has an array of moves, but he can't run and gun at the same time, making the infrequent action more of a chore. Unlockable side missions and *Silent Scope*–style minigames add content, but are mostly forgettable. It's a good game, but it lacks the qualities that make the greats—the *Marios*, *Castlevanias*, and *Metroids*—absolute must-haves. In spite of its great potential, *Splinter Cell* misses more often than not.

_ David Chen

PUB UBI SOFT
DEV UBI SOFT
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE $29.99
PLAYERS 1
ORIGIN CANADA

GMR HARD CELL! 6/10

BETTER THAN: GETTING THE GARROTE
NOT AS GOOD AS: HAVING THE FIFTH FREEDOM
WAIT FOR IT: ROLLING THUNDER FOR THE GBA



"You can't help but be jaw-gapingly impressed."

8.9/10 IGN.com

IGN.COM EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD

"...breaks the mold and delivers the same thrill-ride on your PC that can be had at the movie theatres."

GameZilla.com

Recommended BUY

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NovaWorld

TEEN T Violence Blood

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

DVD
PS1
GBA
PC
GAMECUBE
XBOX
PS2

MORE

TIPS, CODES, MOVIES, AND MORE

THIS MONTH IN MORE

MIDNIGHT CLUB II 082
→ How can you race when you don't know where you're going? Huh? How?

TOP 10 TIPS: A.I. 086
→ Cheating with cards in Yu-Gi-Oh! Don't try this in Vegas

SCREEN 088
→ The spy that never dies, plus the visual tour de force of The Animatrix

THE LIST 090
→ Updated every month on the month

RETROACTIVE 092
→ Guardian Heroes, Ogre Battle 64, and Grim Fandango

GAME GEEZER 098
→ He might as well jump



MORE



MIDNIGHT CLUB II

GMR MAPS OUT YOUR SHORTCUT TO VICTORY

TAKIN' IT TO THE STREETS

TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.

Los Angeles is the high-speed bowl of *Midnight Club II*, at least compared to the cramped alleys of Paris and all-out insanity of Tokyo. Avoid the freeways if you can—getting on is easy, but finding an exit that'll take you where you want to go? Less easy.



1 You'll learn this shortcut in the Takeoff Time race with Steven. Watch out for the metal spires and the junked car; they'll hurt ya.



2 There are five jumps ringing the cloverleaf freeway junction. Don't try to take these jumps at less than full speed or you may land on the freeway.



3 Heading northwest through the building at 4, hit a nitro as you near the ramp. If timed perfectly, you'll land on the ramp on the far side. Risky, but stylish.



4 This building is a hotbed of shortcuts. There are three sets of glass doors you can bust through, depending on where you're coming from.



5 A ramp leads up to the rooftops, and from there you'll jump to a second ramp and back to street level. This east/west shortcut works both ways.



6 There's an east/west route here leading down a set of stairs and through a building (via the glass doors). You can also hit this after jumping the stairs at 8.



7 This route runs parallel to shortcut 6. Coming from the west, break through the doors and follow the tunnel through a few buildings until you wind up at 8.



8 Use the stairs as a jump and make for shortcut 6. Drive through the lower section to set up for 9. Or head under the stairs, make a sharp turn, and hit shortcut 7.



9 Drive through the glass doors here. Follow the route into a parking garage and then through an alley for a long, quick north/south bypass.



10 Ramps lead over the sluice gate if you're in the canals, while an equally narrow jump spans east/west across at street level—key in the last Dice race.

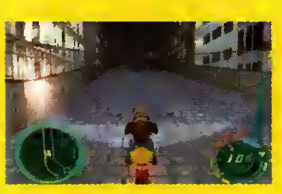


WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS

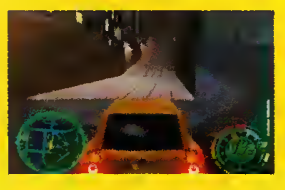
Paris is a mix of wide-open boulevards and tiny, cafe-infested alleyways barely wide enough to accommodate a single hell-for-leather driver, let alone half a dozen. Traffic is a bear, what with all the euro-econoboxes, but you'll also find some absolutely huge jumps and a complex network of catacombs in the bowels of the city. The French mole-men gotta live somewhere, you know.



1 There are multiple routes here; the most useful are the two ramps along the arms of the trocadero—use 'em to jump the Seine and reach the Eiffel Tower park.



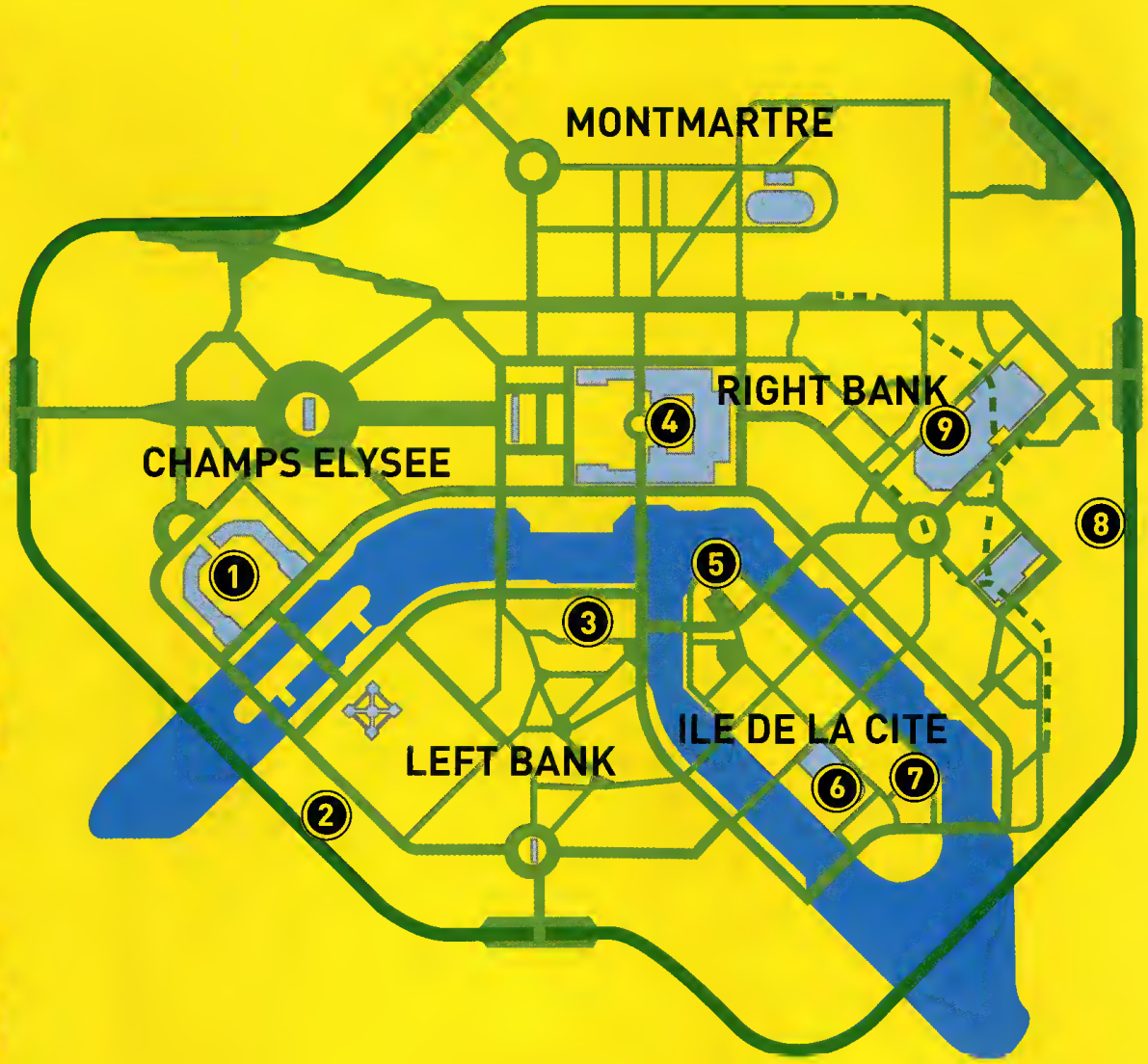
2 This narrow ramp won't necessarily save a ton of time, but at least you'll avoid the traffic. It'll come in handy in the Eiffel Visions race.



3 This ramp leads to a huge jump, which should help you clear the bridge traffic real quick-like. Is tout sweet the technical term?



4 There are three catacomb entrances here. Two ramps lead out of the Louvre courtyard and three more lead in. You can also use the pyramid as a jump.





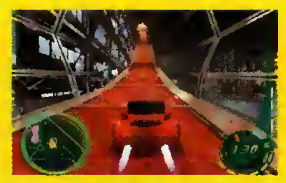
5 Drive onto the barge at full tilt (a nitro may well be in order) and the jump at the end should send you clear across the river. This one will definitely come in handy.



6 Those Notre Dame doors don't look very forgiving, but they'll open if you smack 'em. What's a little sacrilege added to the pile of laws you've already broken?



7 Jump off the barge but be sure to line it up straight or you'll hit a wall. Done correctly, you'll enter a tunnel before popping up at street level.



8 Multiple branching roof-top pathways lead to big jumps here, including a southwest route that'll take you clear across the Seine...if you're moving at top speed.



9 Take the ramp along the side of the building and you can follow two different rooftop paths. You'll encounter this shortcut first in Blog's Rooftop Vistas race.

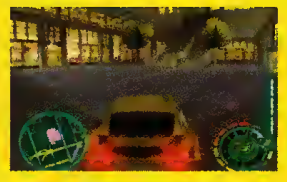
TOKYO A-GO GO GO!

Tokyo is a nightmare of complex streets, narrow alleys, and open pedestrian areas littered with car-stopping public sculpture (damn you, attractive fountains and statuary!). The elevated train tracks spanning from the eastern edge of the map to Shinjuku are a good way to avoid traffic, and as an added bonus, you can jump off at any moment. Just, uh, watch out for trains while you're up there.

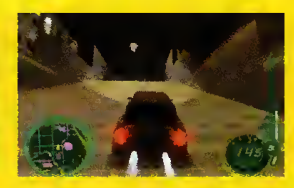
1 This network of narrow alleys and indoor hallways will save you some time and give you a few golden moments of respite from all the Sunday drivers out there.



2 Bust through the doors of this Shibuya mall and hit those escalators at top speed. You should land right in an intersection—hopefully one of the carless variety.



3 Heading west towards Shinjuku, there's a long route from an Imperial Palace tunnel to the far end of the map, finishing with another huge jump.



4 The pedestrian area here is full of little alleys and alternate routes that you won't find on the map. And there's a network of tunnels below ground, too.



5 This path works as a quick entrance/exit to the elevated train tracks. Make sure you have enough speed coming through the building to clear the low wall.





6 There's quite a large network of elevated ramps and bridges in this area. Venture up here without knowing your way around and risk losing a lot of time.



7 This alleyway shortcut through the heart of Ginza doesn't include any death-defying jumps, but it will save you a few crucial seconds.



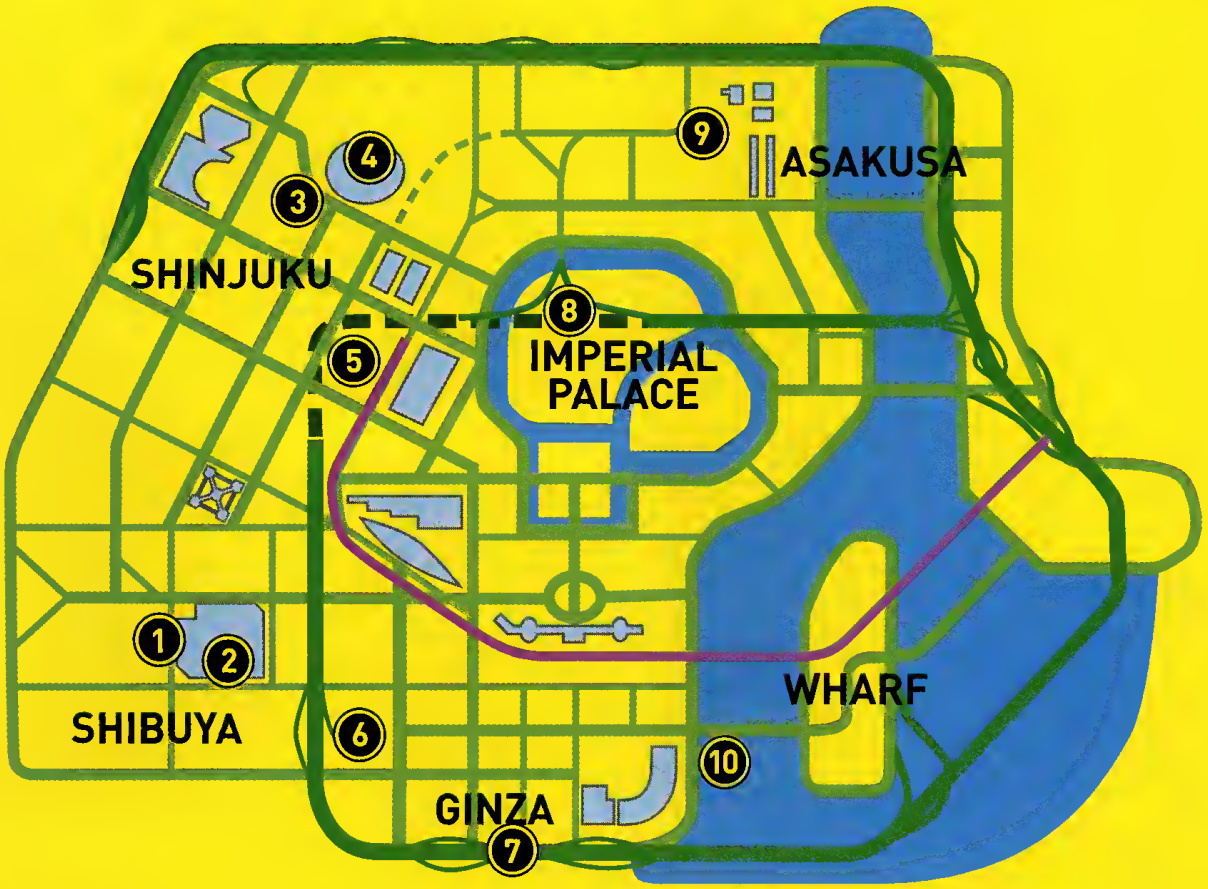
8 There's a small network of tunnels under the Imperial Palace, and they all meet right in the middle. Why go around an obstacle when you can go through it?



9 The western Asakusa area is crisscrossed by a network of tiny alleys, some even tighter than the backstreets of Paris. If you know the way, these can be a real help.



10 Drive through a warehouse area, bust a gate along the water, and hit the jump to reach the far wharf. If you're going too slow, you'll end up submerged.



XB

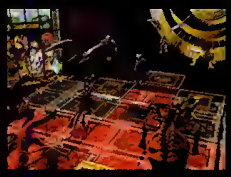
PS2



A.I.

HIS CODES ARE REAL. BUT HE IS NOT





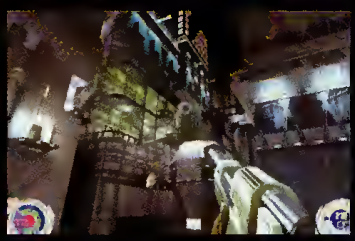


01 YU-GI-OH! THE DUELISTS OF THE ROSES PS2

➔ If you're not getting the cards you need, go to the Build Deck screen, press R3, and then enter one of the following passwords.

Card	Password
Ancient Tree Of Enlightenment	EKJHQ109
Aqua Dragon	JXCB6FU7
Barrel Dragon	GTJXSBJ7
Beast King of the Swamp	QXNTQPAX
Birdface	N54T4TY5
Black Hole	UMJ10MQB
Blast Sphere	CZN5GD2X
Change of Heart	SBYDQM8B
Crush Card	SRA7L5YR
Dragonseeker	81EZCH8B
Earthshaker	Y34PN1SV
Elf's Light	E5G3NRAD
Exodia's Head	37689434
Fairy King Trusdale	YF07QVEZ
Fairy's Gift	NVE7A3EZ
Goblin Fan.	92886423
Gravity Bind	0HNFG9WX
Greenkappa	YBJMCD6Z
Harpy's Feather Sweep	8HJHQPNP
Horn of the Unicorn	S14FGKQ1
Left Arm of Exodia	A5CF6HSH
Magician of Faith	GME1S3UM
Meteor Dragon	86985631
Mimicat	69YDQM85
Mirror Wall	53297534
Mystical Capture Chains	N1NDJMQ3
Robotic Knight	S5S7NKNH
Royal Decree	8TETQHE1
Seiyaryu	2H4D85J7
Serpentine Princess	UMQ3WZUZ
Slate Warrior	73153736
Swordsman from a Foreign Land	CZ81UVGR
Swordstalker	AH0PSHEB
Tactical Warrior	054TC727

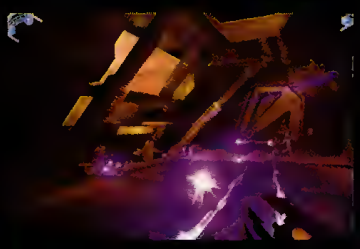
02 JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST XBOX, GC



➔ If the Force isn't with you, young padawan, go to the Cheats section and punch in these codes.

Unlimited Force
SCOOTEr
Unlock All Characters in Multiplayer Mode
PEEPS
Begin Game with Lightsaber
FUDGE
Infinite Ammo
BISCUIT
Invincibility
BUBBLE – Warning: If you enter this code before you fight Desann for the first time, you'll be unable to beat him, because Kyle cannot be defeated.
All Movies Unlocked
FLICKY
Hidden Level
DEMO
Unlock First Seven Levels
CHERRY

03 UNREAL 2: THE AWAKENING PC



➔ Press the tilde key (~) to enter Console mode, then activate Cheat mode by typing "bemymonkey" (no quotation marks). Enter these codes and rule the galaxy with an iron fist.

Walk Through Walls
Ghost
Flying Mode
Fly
Return to Normal Movement
Walk
All Weapons
Loaded
Maximum Ammo
Allammo
Enemies Run from You
Fearme
Phoenix Powersuit
Phoenix
Teleport to Location in Crosshairs
Teleport
Level Skip
Nextlevel
Kill All Active NPCs
Killactivenpcs
Kill All Dormant NPCs
Killdormantnpcs
Enable/Disable Heads-Up Display
Togglehud

04 DIE HARD: VENDETTA GC



➔ You can't have his looks, charm, or ex-wife, but you can stroll through this game as easily as he made his way through Nakatomi Plaza. At Main menu:

Invincibility
L(eft), R(ight), L, R, L, R, L, R
Level Select
X, Y, Z, Z, X, Y, Z, Z
Flame On
X, Y, B, X, Y, B
Unlimited Hero Time
B, X, Y, Z, Left, Right
Big Heads
Right, Right, Left, Right
Small Heads
Left, Left, Right, Left
Pin Heads
B, X, Y, B, X, Y
Exploding Fists
Right, Right, Y, B, X, Right, Right
Hot Fists
Left, Left, X, B, Y, Left, Left
Exploding Bullets
Left, right, Z, Y, B
Liquid Metal Textures
B, Y, X, B, Y, X

05 MVP BASEBALL 2003
PS2 XBOX



Tired of whiffing when you're at bat? Trying to break Hank Aaron's home run record? Enter these names for your players.

Bat Will Always Break
Keegn Patersn
Jacob Patersn
Ziggy Patersn
Guaranteed Home Run
Erik Kiss
16:9 Anamorphic Widescreen
On either system, hold down both triggers for three seconds and then press Left on the digital pad. **To disable the cheat**, hold down both triggers for three seconds and then press Right.

06 DYNASTY WARRIORS 4
PS2



If you're having trouble crushing feudal Japan, use these codes to bend helpless civilians to your will. Enter them at the Main menu.

Unlock All Generals
R1, R2, L1, L2, Square, Square, Triangle, Triangle
Unlock All Shu Generals
R1, R1, L1, L1, Square, Triangle, Square, Triangle
Unlock All Wei Generals
R1, R1, L1, L2, Square, Square, Square, Triangle
Unlock All Wu Generals
R2, R1, L2, L1, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Square

07 BLACK AND BRUISED
GC PS2





While it's not the best boxing game ever to hit consoles, it's a fun enough game for a rental. Grab some friends, head to the Cheat menu, punch in these codes, and knock each other's heads off.

PS2

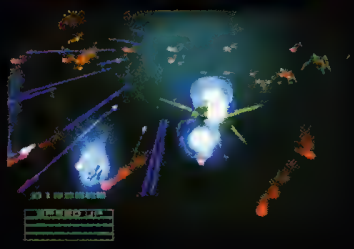
Every Boxer
X, Circle, Square, Square, R1, R1, Square, Circle, X
Infinite Power-ups
Start, X, Circle, X, Circle, X, Circle, Square, Square, Square, Start
Invincibility
Start, X, X, Circle, Circle, R1, R1, Square, Square, Start
Turbo Mode
Start, R1 (press ten times), Start
International Mode
Start, X, X, X, O, O, O, Square, Square, Square, Start

GameCube

Every Boxer
Start, A, Y, X, X, Z, Z, X,Y, A, Start
Infinite Power-ups
Start, A, Y, A, Y, A, Y, X, X, X, Start
Invincibility
Start, A, A, Y, Y, Z, Z, X, X, Start
Turbo Mode
Start, Z (press ten times), Start
International Mode
Start, A, A, A, Y, Y, Y, X, X, X, Start

08 ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER
PS2





If purging the world of evil isn't enough, or if you'd rather play the **Zoradius minigame**, select Extra Missions, then Boss Battle mode. Then fight Vic Viper. When you're up **against Leo**, pause the game and press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, L1, R1. If you're having trouble during the **Zoradius minigame**, pause the action and re-enter the code for every power-up.

09 NBA STARTING FIVE
PS2 XBOX



If you're not happy with the way your team looks, enter these codes for an interesting cosmetic overhaul.

Big Heads
BIGHEAD
Big Feet
BIGFOOT
Big Hands
BIGHAND
Flat Players
PANCAKE.
Uncle Sam Red, White, and Blue Hats
SILKHAT
Groucho Marx Look
PARTYGLASSES
First Draft Pick
FIRSTPICK

10 DEVIL MAY CRY 2
PS2



Product placement doesn't get any better than this. To see **Dante and Lucia's alternative attire** (brought to you in part by Diesel Clothing), beat the first level with either character, then save your game. Reboot your PS2 and wait for "Press Start Button" to appear onscreen. Then press L3, R3, L1, R1, L2, R2, L3, and R3. If you've done it correctly, you'll hear a chime. Then pick Load Game. Once you're in the Menu screen, press L1 or R1 to check out your new threads.





SCREEN

BOND GETS LOADED ON VODKA WITH HALLE BERRY AND THE ANIMATRIX GETS REAL



→ David Justice, you may now kill yourself.



→ "I hear your leather-clad girlfriend there can't act for sh_t, old boy."



→ The drivers test could have gone better...

DIE ANOTHER DAY

AH, MR. BOND, WE'VE BEEN EXSHPECTING YOU

RATED PG-13 | 132 MINUTES | 2 DISCS | DIRECTED BY LEE TAMAHORI

Diabolical villain bent on holding the world for ransom? Check. Giant metallic umbrella thingy in space pointing "lasers" at us? Check. Ridiculous gadgets that make everything explode? Check. Busty Oscar-winning actress giving Bond a run for his money? Check. Wait, hang on....

After the terrible *The World is Not Enough*, which exposed the new 'extreme' Bond formula for the surprisingly vulnerable thing that it is, it's back to the drawing board for *Die Another Day*, and it's largely a success. Halle Berry hams it up as the sexiest Bond "girl" in years, Brosnan is pitch-perfect as the world's smuggest man, and the plot is almost straightforward enough to follow while eating your own weight in popcorn.

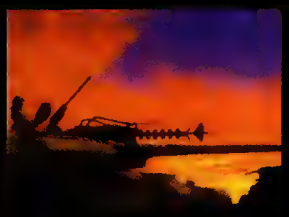
The beginning is a contrived load of rubbish, as usual, as is the blue-screened ice-flow surfing incident, and there's never an excuse for allowing Madonna to appear in your movie, let alone allowing her to—No!—speak. But the fight between Bond and arch-villain Gustav Graves (Toby Stephens) in the fencing club is magic, and the vision of Berry's Jinx emerging from the ocean will give you something to smile about in your old age. Well, that and your ability to take a pee without getting up.

Extras: Disc 1: MI6 Datastream (behind-the-scenes and pop trivia), audio commentary, catalog trailer. Disc 2: "Inside Die Another Day" (making-of documentary), "Mission Deconstruction" (multiangle shots of stunts and sequences, plus special effects info).

THE ANIMATRIX
AT LEAST THERE'S NO KEANU

THE ANIMATRIX ☐ WARNER BROS ☐ DIRECTORS ANDY JONES, MAHIRO MAEDA, SHINICHIRO WATANABE, YOSHIAKI KAWAJIRI, TAKESHI KOIKE, KOJI MORIMOTO, PETER CHUNG







→ Don't expecrt a happy ending in *Final Flight of the Osiris* (here and below left)

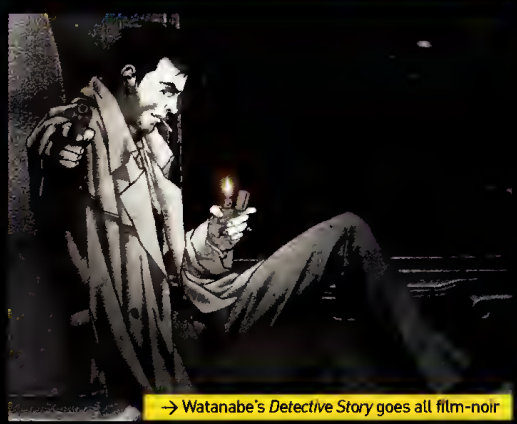


→ *Secnd Rennaissance*: hippy trippy (above and top)





→ Program tests the resolution of its hero



→ Watanabe's *Detective Story* goes all film-noir

You've got to admire the marketing savvy of the executive who decided to pair the staggeringly awful *Dreamcatcher* with the sexy, beautifully rendered *Final Flight of the Osiris* in movie theaters. If he applied to same logic to car sales—"You want to buy the new Nissan Z? Well, you can only have it if you buy a Pontiac Aztek..."—there'd be a lot of people driving around in something that looked like an origami tank that had just passed through the digestive system of an AT-AT. So far, we've seen four of the proposed eight shorts, and if you haven't yet (and why not?), then here's a handy guide:

Final Flight of the Osiris is a feat of CGI unequalled; Square not only hit the bulls-eye with the character models (they're all eerily realistic), but the animation is top notch, too—something that severely hampered the studio's *Final Fantasy* movie. As with all the *Animatrix* shorts, *Osiris* provides background for the plot of *Matrix Reloaded*. In this case, a pair of freedom fighters clash with a truly frightening number of hunters who are searching for Zion. If you want to see it, you have to pay to see *Dreamcatcher* (Doh!).

Second Renaissance Part 1, directed by Mahiro Maeda (*Blue Submarine No 6*), is more-traditional anime that provides a sweeping summary of the rise of the machines, from their birth as chirpy-looking butler types to radicalized robots with their own nation. Of all the *Animatrix* movies, this is the most visually impressive, and part 2 debuts in May.

Yoshiaki Kawajiri's entry is Program. The director of *Vampire Hunter D* does a masterful job of producing a clean, sharply focused confrontation between two lovers in a training program, as one admits he's sold out to the machines in return for being re-inserted into *The Matrix*. Swords fly, bamboo splits, and samurais get chopped in half.

Detective Story from Shinchiro Watanabe changes the pace. He continues his signature jazz noodling with a stylized portrayal of a gumshoe hired by *The Matrix* to find Trinity. It's a slow-burner and a little too contrived, but effective nevertheless.

A DVD with all eight *Animatrix* debuts June 23. You might want to order yours, like, now.

'TRIX CLICKS...

www.intothematrix.com
The official website for the short films. You can download them here in various resolutions, for both Mac and PC.

www.matrixfans.net/anime
Geek out with the Matrix fans online with up to the second news—and buy a nice poster while you're at it.

RETROACTIVE

GMR REINVESTIGATES CLASSICS OF THE PAST. LET YOUR FREAK FLAG FLY

PC

GUARDIAN HEROES

BEST. BEAT-EM-UP. EVER

1998 FOR SEGA SATURN

Back in 1998, when *Guardian Heroes* was released for Sega Saturn, the word was that it was a pleasant take on the *Final Fight*, side-scrolling beat-em-up genre, but nothing to lose sleep over. Well, those critics were wrong.

Well, times have changed and it's up to us to set the record straight. *Guardian Heroes* is the best 2D beat-em-up ever. Developed by Treasure, (*Radiant Silvergun*, *Ikaruga*), *Heroes* is a 2D special-effects extravaganza that broke ground in many ways. The ultraresponsive 2D characters, with *Street Fighter*–lite moves, can jump into or out of three layers of fore- and backgrounds. Predating *Daikatana* and such stealth-buddy actioners as EA's *X-Squad*, *Heroes* gives you an undead warrior with different A.I. settings (guard, berserk, etc.) you can manipulate. Two players can team up to take different paths through the game in hopes of beating the cartoony but tough final boss. Also worth mentioning: *Heroes*' groundbreaking multiplayer mode enables players to unlock 45 characters (including peasants-gotta love that!). In hindsight, *Guardian Heroes* has yet to meet its match.

_James Mielke





NOW... If you can find it, buy it—it's worth it at any price. Still looks sharp, plays even better, and packed with replay value. HARD TO FIND

GMR 10/10 UNBEATABLE

THEN... Underrated at the time, gamers now go ape over anything Treasure-related. Worth just as much as *Radiant Silvergun* in our opinion.

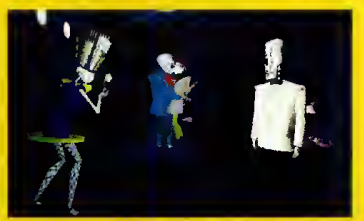
GMR 8/10 UNDERRATED



→ We opted to show you the Japanese cover of *Guardian Heroes* instead of the U.S. one. Why? Because the U.S. cover will make you go blind with rage.







GRIM FANDANGO

CREEPY. KOOKY. SPOOKY. OOKY

1998 FOR PC CD-ROM

With games like *Half-Life* and *StarCraft* breaking onto the scene, it's not surprising that PC gamers frequently refer to 1998 as PC gaming's golden year. That year also saw LucasArts release its most epic adventure game yet: *Grim Fandango*. Brilliant in its scripting, art, and puzzle design, *Grim Fandango* wasn't merely the best adventure game of the year—it was the best in many years, and one of the greatest games of all time.

Tim Schafer (see *GMR* #2) took elements from a famous UC Berkeley folklore class and seamlessly folded them into near-perfect adventure-game design. He combined a script that evokes *Chinatown*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and *Casablanca* with an aesthetic that fuses Mexican Day of the Dead decor with '40s cinema noir.

Grim Fandango featured a keyboard interface that felt more like *Resident Evil* than most mouse-driven point-and-click games. It was also a resource hog, but the dazzling art direction made it worthwhile. Adventure-game newcomers, take note: This is a brutally hard adventure game filled with such crazy-ass puzzles as figuring out how to get a metal detector by drinking. But while it might seem insanely difficult in this day and age, keep in mind that at the time of its release, adventure games were quite common. Difficulty aside, *Grim Fandango*'s story and production values (good enough to rival *Xenosaga*'s) make it as much of a classic now as it was then.

_Thierry Nguyen



→ The bizarre *Grim Fandango* poses a lot of questions, such as this toughie: "Can a skeleton in the land of the dead die, and if so, how?"

NOW... Any machine can run it, and the interface feels just right, too. Some people might find all the brain-crunching too frustrating. OBTAINABLE

GMR 9/10 TIMELESS

THEN... Back in the day, only a quirky interface and hefty system requirements kept *Grim Fandango* from a perfect score.

GMR 9/10 PIÑATA









OGRE BATTLE 64

MICROMANAGERS, UNITE!

OCTOBER 2000 FOR N64

Midway through N64's lifecycle, Nintendo's decision to stick with a cartridge-based format drove many developers to the considerable benefits of the CD-ROMs (namely, gobs of space). With *Ogre Battle 64*, Atlus chose to seek out focus on deep strategy in lieu of flashy CG or sound. The result? A densely packed epic and important addition to Nintendo's inarguably sparse inventory of quality games.

The game puts players in the role of Magnus, who must recruit and lead the Palatinue army and wrest freedom from a corrupt king and his flunkies. Friendship, betrayal, and political intrigue weave a byzantine tapestry of relationships that only an RPG fan could love. Thankfully, a handy diagram illustrates the changing relationships between characters, parties, and nations.

Despite its complexity, *Ogre Battle*'s story doesn't drip with originality. No matter, though—this game has deep strategy in spades, and RPG-starved Nintendo gamers loved it. Players can direct up to 10 units of five soldiers each, and stat-o-philes can get their fill by tweaking each character's inventory and behavior. Units are comprised of both humans (with nearly 50 character classes) and monsters, including dragons, griffins, and gorgons. Between skirmishes, an array of random events ensures that the player feels like he's part of a much bigger picture.

Given the game's scope, don't expect to control each and every character's movements. Instead, control is limited to RTS-style point-and-click directions (go there, kill them, rest a bit). That's not such a bad thing, considering the sheer number of characters, environments, and battles you manage.

During combat, the game shifts to the more familiar isometric view. As with *Final Fantasies* and *Suikodens* past, action features two opposing parties, with multiple characters dashing out and striking one another in real-time before falling back. Again, player interaction is limited to readjusting unit formation and issuing commands, but with statistics for parrying, missing, and critical strikes, there's plenty to keep each battle lively and unpredictable, and your noggin challenged.

Visually, the game actually presents a welcome throwback to simpler times (polygons were the current rage, but in their infancy). *Ogre Battle* effectively mixes 3D maps, hand-animated elements, adjustable views, and scaling effects with aplomb. The music, while far from symphonic, is catchy and charming, and so are the effects that accompany each toggle of the thumbstick. In all, not too shabby for a turn-based strategy game.

Near-infinite customizability, an army of unique characters (literally), and plenty of forking paths in both geography and narrative make this game a meaty 60-plus hour affair that's packed with replay value, assuming you can find a copy

_David Chen

NOW... The brain-tickling gameplay holds up well. Using your brain never goes out of style...right? **OBTAINABLE**

THEN... Strategy. Swordplay. It's like Shakespeare, with a lot less iambic pentameter and approximately 99 percent more ogres.

GMR 8/10 OWNABLE

GMR 8/10 OUTRAGEOUS



WELCOME TO
THE GAMING CYCLE

DISCOVERY



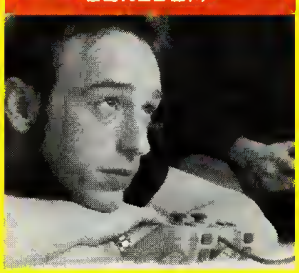
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GMA'S EXHAUSTIVE GUIDE TO THE ONLY GAMES THAT MATTEA

BUYER'S GUIDE

PS2 TOP 100 BAINGING THE HEAT

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
.hack//Infection	Bandai	The world's first MMORPG, but this time the O stands for "offline." Comes packed with a DVD of the animated series.	7
Amplitude	Sony	A whole slew of new artists who, naturally, bring along brand-new tunes for your button-pressing pleasure.	8
ATV Offroad Fury	Sony	The key to being a successful ATV offroader lies in launching yourself through the air as often as possible. A fun and floaty racer.	9
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Interplay	A beautiful-looking *Dungeons & Dragons*–based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	An RPG that forces you to die and start over multiple times? It sounds ridiculous, but it actually works.	9
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	An aggressive driving simulator that defies the rules of physics. Includes a dedicated Crash mode for aspiring demolition-derby stars.	8
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	Take the best elements of *Street Fighter* and *King of Fighters*, and you'll have the best thing going in the world of 2D combat.	9
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	A superb rally racer with superrealistic properties—right down to the extended time you spend sitting in the Ford Focus.	8
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	After numerous shoddy attempts to bring the classic *Contra* gameplay to a next-gen system, Konami finally gets it right.	9
Crazy Taxi	Acclaim	As good as opening your PlayStation 2, rigging Dreamcast hardware inside, and then loading up a DC build of *Crazy Taxi*.	8
Dance Dance Revolution: DDRMax	Konami	Before, if you wanted to play *DDR*, you had to subject yourself to Joe and Jane Public. Now, you can embarrass yourself at home.	6
Dark Cloud 2	Sony	Improves upon the first one in every way imaginable. Building and upgrading weapons to your liking is a blast.	9
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, *XXX* was based on Dave Mirra, and it actually focused on—get this—biking.	9
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	Before the entire series went Xbox exclusive, Team Ninja's gang of jiggly grapplers found a temporary home on PS2.	8
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	One of the best PC games of 2000 is ported faithfully to PS2. Upgrade your character's skills and attributes as you see fit.	8
Devil May Cry	Capcom	Did you know *Devil May Cry* was going to be *Resident Evil 4* before it was spun off into its own series? Dh, you did? Never mind, then.	9
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	Melee combat set to the history of ancient China. Enemies number in the hundreds along branching story paths.	9
Escape from Monkey Island	Sony Online	LucasArts has a fine tradition of putting out excellent graphical adventure games, and this latest charmer is no exception.	9
EverQuest Online Adventures	LucasArts	PS2 owners finally get to see what the whole *EverQuest* thing is about—and will never be seen again.	8
F1 2002	EA Sports	Minor refinements over the 2001 version may not be enough to justify the upgrade, but it's still a solid *F1* game.	8
Final Fantasy X	Square EA	The PS2's first *Final Fantasy* does away the traditional overworld, but introduces full voice acting. Artistically beautiful, as always.	9
The Getaway	Sony	Dpinions vary wildly on this British-themed gangster (not gangsta) game. Even the British can't agree!	8
Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	Sony	Core gameplay is unchanged, but the graphics get a complete overhaul, which makes *GT3* the best-playing/looking sim on the market.	10
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	A phenomenon of both gameplay and sales. A free-roaming interactive mobster film that's sold more than 8 million copies to date.	9
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	As bad boy Tommy Vercetti, there's something indescribably cool about cruising Vice City's beach strip while rocking to "Billie Jean."	10
Guilty Gear XX	Sony	Tired of waiting for *Street Fighter 4*? This one should more than compensate. Great visuals, great control, and great extras.	8
Half-Life	Sierra	After it was cancelled for Dreamcast, a console version of this PC classic didn't seem very likely. But here we are.	8
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	It's a farming simulator. It's fun. These two statements may seem wildly incongruous, but somehow, *Harvest Moon* makes it work.	8
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
Hitman 2	Eidos	Most of the problems with the original *Hitman* have been fixed, making this one of the more rewarding action games on PS2.	9
Hot Shots Golf 3	Sony	Some golf games need something extra to attract gamers. How about arcade-style control, annoying taunts, and multiplayer modes?	9
Ico	Sony	An underappreciated work of art with challenging puzzles, fantastic lighting, and engrossing character relationships.	9
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubi Soft	A notable improvement over its predecessor, with the equally addictive feature of monster breeding.	8
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	Sony	The studio that gave birth to *Crash Bandicoot* brings a couple new mascots and a gorgeous new 3D world to PS2.	8
Jet X20	Sony	More extreme-sports fun, but this time, it's all wet. Finishing is only half the battle; performing tricks factors into the final standings.	9
Kingdom Hearts	Square EA	When the amazing, talented artists from Square join forces with the amazing, talented artists from Disney, good things happen.	8
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	*Klonoa* became a rare find in the later days of PlayStation. The outstanding sequel looks to share the same fate. Grab it if you can.	8
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	There's an option to play the famous endurance race true-to-life: 24 hours straight of driving. Better stock up on Mountain Dew.	8
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	EA Games	Anything bearing the valuable *Lord of the Rings* license will sell well. Happily, there's more to this beat-em-up than just the name.	9
Madden NFL 2003	EA Sports	The series' first foray into online console gaming is a success. Everything you love about *Madden* can now be shared with strangers.	9
The Mark of Kri	Sony	A slick action game with innovative controls: Each button is assigned to a different enemy, allowing for combat with multiple targets.	8
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	Capcom	It's the spiritual successor to the classic *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, complete with heart boxers and insane difficulty.	8
MDK 2 Armageddon	Interplay	Much improved over the original Dreamcast incarnation, *MDK 2 Armageddon* is one of the better recent action games.	9
Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts	A strong single-player campaign paves the way through the beaches of Normandy and the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	There's a lot in this update: 350 VR missions, 150 alternate missions, five Snake Tales, and one skateboard. Yes, a skateboard.	9
Midnight Club	Rockstar Games	This enjoyable and energetic one-on-one street racer from Rockstar provides a refreshing change of pace from the usual fare.	8
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	Giant robots are great, but basing them on the *Gundam* license with Capcom developing makes them greater, if that's even possible.	8
MotoGP 3	Namco	After three attempts, Namco got it right...sort of. The realism is astounding, as long as you ignore the giant Mr. Driller.	8
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	Hate turning left for hours? NASCAR games probably aren't your thing. But if you get it, *Thunder 2003* should be right up your alley.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega Sports	Yet another compelling reason to own a PS2 Network Adaptor, *NBA2K3* is the best-playing game of hoops on the system.	9

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	An improvement over previous versions, with a heavier focus on the faster-paced aspects of the game as opposed to a true simulation.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA Football 2003	EA Sports	A lot like *Madden*, only with exploited college kids and marching bands. It's also the best college football game available.	9
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	EA Games	Strangely, the game's best version is on the least-powerful hardware. Running from cops has never been this fun, or consequence free.	9
NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	Sega's latest football effort compares nicely to the firmly entrenched *Madden* juggernaut, and even beats it in some areas.	9
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	So you like football games but don't care for playcalling strategy, formations, and clock management? *Blitz* has been here for years.	8
NHL 2002	Electronic Arts	Hockey is played on ice, with six men trying to put a puck into the other team's goal. This is a good digital representation of that sport.	9
NHL 2K3	Sega Sports	For the more discerning hockey connoisseur, *NHL2K3* has made great strides since its debut on the now-defunct Dreamcast.	9
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	The effort put forward in defeating Nobunga in *Onimusha* has gone to waste, as he's risen from the dead and is appearing in the sequel.	8
Onimusha: Warlords	Capcom	Survival-horror with a taste for feudal Japan, gorgeous artistic design, and a whole lot more action than its *Resident Evil* kin.	8
RAO: Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	It's hard to go wrong with giant robots blowing stuff up, but Enix's latest effort goes one step further with a novel control scheme.	8
Ratchet & Clank	Sony	Insomniac's terrific action-platformer has you jumping from world to world in search of new weapons and gadgets.	8
Rayman 2: Revolution	Ubi Soft	One of the best 3D platformers available, the *Rayman* franchise doesn't get the attention it deserves: It's good, and you should buy it.	9
Red Faction	THQ	A first-person shooter that features destructible environments, drivable vehicles, and a strong single-player campaign.	9
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	Capcom	More of a true sequel than *Resident Evil 3*, its Dreamcast debut meant many fans missed out. Problem solved!	8
Rez	Sega	A fairly standard shooter dressed as a visual and aural masterpiece. Sadly unappreciated by the vast majority of the gaming world.	8
Ridge Racer V	Namco	The always enjoyable *Ridge Racer* series scores well, thanks to solid control, an enthralling sense of speed, and a fitting soundtrack.	9
Rumble Racing	Electronic Arts	This fun arcade racer originally started out with the NASCAR license, but it was dropped in favor of original designs.	8
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	This Greek mythology-based action game is an update of the arcade and NES classic in name only. Fun combat and great music.	9
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega	Arcade-style tennis perfection when it launched for Dreamcast. It's holding up just as well on PS2.	8
Silent Hill 2	Konami	More creepy than downright scary, the *Silent Hill* series takes a more sophisticated, cerebral approach to the survival-horror genre.	8
The Sims	Electronic Arts	A new mode helps you figure out how to keep your Sim from pissing himself. Or, if you're like that, how to make him do it.	9
Sky Gunner	Atlus	If you can look past the slowdown issue (and it can be a pretty big issue at times), *Sky Gunner* is great shooting fun.	8
Sky Odyssey	Activision	A flight game that channels the spirit of *Pilotwings*, with mission-based gameplay and a large array of aircraft to pilot.	8
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	Sony	A solid platformer with a unique aesthetic and animations. Lacks a little in the challenge department; it's a little on the short side, too.	8
Smuggler's Run	Rockstar Games	In keeping with Rockstar's games, *Smuggler's Run* indulges the inner criminal in all of us.	8
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	Sony	Possibly the the best reason to own a PS2 Network Adaptor. The team-based military tactics work better online than off.	9
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	As expected, the PS2 port of the Xbox original takes a graphical hit. Doesn't mean it's not still a great game, though.	8
Spy Hunter	Midway	A re-creation of the classic that manages to avoid tarnishing all the good memories, which can't be said for a lot of "classic" remakes.	8
SSX	Electronic Arts	A surprisingly good snowboarder with over-the-top stunts and great course design; it stands out as one of the better PS2 launch titles.	9
SSX Tricky	Electronic Arts	*SSX Tricky* boasts a new set of insane gravity-defying and physically impossible stunts, not to mention all-new tracks and characters.	8
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	Customizable submarines rule the waters of the future; *Sub Rebellion* is an action game that's short on graphics but very entertaining.	8
Tekken Tag Tournament	Namco	Essentially *Tekken 3* with enhanced graphics and a tag-teaming. Which isn't bad, considering *Tekken 3* is a great game to begin with.	8
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	*Tenchu* sneaked onto the list without us noticing. We were drunk on sake and telling tales of heroism, so that might be why.	8
Theme Park Roller Coaster	Electronic Arts	*Sim City* meets Six Flags. Design your own dangerous rollercoasters without fear of getting slapped with wrongful-death lawsuits.	8
TimeSplitters	Eidos	Many responsible for N64's *GoldenEye* are also responsible for this, and it shows. A great shooter with loads of multiplayer options.	8
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options, including maps, weapons, and game modes, too.	8
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	Cruise Tokyo's highways in search of less-than-legal street-racing action. Despite some visual issues, it's definitely worth checking out.	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft dropped the two-minute time limit in Career mode and added an array of objectives. Level design is a step up from *THPS3*.	9
Twisted Metal: Black	Sony	With the franchise safely out of the hands of 989 Studios, *Twisted Metal* makes a welcome return to its former, gruesome glory.	9
Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony	If you buy a PS2 Network Adaptor, you get it for free. Which kind of makes sense, considering you can't play it without one.	8
Virtua Fighter 4	Sega	The *Virtua Fighter* series has always been finely crafted, and this version is no exception. The depth of this game is staggering.	10
War of the Monsters	SCEA	King Kong's agent wanted a cool $20 mil for this fun beat-em-up, but Sony balked and went with the less-recognizable Congar.	9
Wild Arms 3	Sony	A grand adventure with a Wild West theme, endearing characters, great music, and a refreshingly uncomplicated battle system.	8
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	The Designer's Republic touch may be missing, but the series' oft-imitated, never surpassed style of racing remains intact.	8
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega	*WSB2K3* is the best-looking baseball game with a great Franchise mode, but it's got A.I. issues that need to be worked out.	8
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6	Konami	Feet down, the most natural-feeling soccer game ever. It lacks FIFA's presentation and licenses, but makes up for it in gameplay.	9
WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It	THQ	Even if this game scored a zero, it would still sell a truckload of copies. Such is the marketing power of Vince McMahon & family.	8
Xenosaga	Namco	A massive RPG of epic story and length. Namco's now in charge of the *Xeno* series, and this is the first of many planned chapters.	9
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	Better enemies, better pacing, better music, better stages, and better weapons. What we're trying to say is, *ZOE2* is better than the first.	8

[BUY!]

SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS



➔ Need a good reason to take your PS2 online? Look no further than *SOCOM*'s running-around-shooting-guys fun. The single-player A.I. leans a little too far to the dumbass side of the scale, but sneaking around the online maps looking for that last kill (and then laughing at him) is loads of fun.

[AVOID!]

WWE CRUSH HOUR



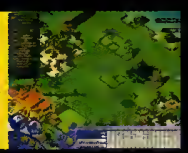
➔ If magazines had not only heads, but heads capable of shaking in a disapproving fashion, then that's what your copy of *GMR* 05 would be doing right now. Played-out car combat mixed with played-out wrestling personae assigned to random vehicles that have nothing to do with their character is not a good combination.

PC TOP 50 EXPANSION PACKS, ANYONE?

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
Aliens vs. Predator 2	Sierra	Three completely different first-person shooters combined into one dark and terrifying gaming experience.	8
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn	Interplay	The rare occasion when the sequel to a classic goes above and beyond its predecessor. Can't wait for *III*.	9
Black & White	EA Games	Highly conceptual "god-game" that has you ruling over mortals with a little help from a giant cow-monster.	8
Battlefield 1942	EA Games	Multiplayer shooter set in WWII that lets you jump in and out of vehicles (even planes!) while battling dozens of your friends.	9
Civilization III	Infogrames	Sid Meier's classic just keeps rolling along, getting bigger and more complex while somehow managing to remain just as addictive.	10
Commandos 2	Eidos	Control a squad of elite commandos in WWII as they infiltrate, detonate, and assassinate across multiple battlefields.	8
Diablo II: Lords of Destruction	Blizzard	The sequel to the ultimate dungeon-crawling clickfest should please anyone who wasted their teens playing the first game.	8
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	Hack and slash doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, it can even be in beautiful 3D with no loading time between levels.	8
Enemy Engaged: Comanche v. Hokum	Empire Int.	Extremely realistic chopper sim that's not for the weak of heart or impatient of trigger finger.	8
EverQuest	Sony Online	The massively multiplayer RPG that's so addictive, it makes crack look like Sanka. Play this game at your own risk.	9
EverQuest: Scars of Velious	Sony Online	The expansion pack to EverCrack opens up new worlds, new characters, and tigers with boobies (finally!).	8
F1 2002	EA Sports	Delivers authentic yet accessible Formula One racing enjoyment for every open-wheel racing fan out there.	9
Fallout Tactics	Interplay	Squad-based tactical strategy game set in the same universe as the classic *Fallout* RPG that sets a new standard.	8
Freedom Force	EA Games	Clever use of strategy and RPG elements help make this witty comic book superhero-themed game one of the best.	10
Freelancer	Microsoft	It's not as simtastic as some might expect a PC space-shooter to be, but that's part of its charm. Random missions keep the fun going.	8
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	Ubi Soft	This top-notch mission pack makes a decent modern combat simulation into an outstanding one.	8
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	A shooter/strategy hybrid full of weird British humor, unique and beautiful 3D graphics, and naked lady sea monsters.	9
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	It's a tough choice for Formula One fans; *GP4* and *F1 2002* are both worthy of your hard-earned dollars.	9
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	The poster child for all that's wrong in gaming is chock full of all that's fun in gaming. And you get to import your own MP3s.	10
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	An almost-perfect blend of action and stealth, it's a humongous improvement over the first game.	9
IL-2 Sturmovik	Ubi Soft	Amazingly realistic WWII flight sim covering a region seldom visited in computer games: the Eastern Front	8
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	Yeah, the lightsaber battles are sweet, but Lando's cameo just about seals the deal. And is his ship fly or what?	9
Kohan: Ahriman's Gift	Strategy First	Surprisingly accessible fantasy-themed real-time strategy that's as much fun in single player as it is against other mages online.	9
Madden NFL 2003	EA Sports	Finally as good as all the superior console football games out there, this one is a gridiron classic on the PC.	9
Max Payne	G.O.D.	Despite some corny writing, this überhip noir videogame feels like a movie, but plays like a great action game.	8
Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	EA Games	Worth it just for the incredibly intense D-Day mission that almost matches the same scene in *Saving Private Ryan*.	9
Medieval: Total War	Activision	The ultimate historical strategy game has everything from political intrigue to sweeping real-time battles.	9
Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002	Microsoft	The definitive civilian flight simulator. So authentic, actual airline pilots use it to keep their skills sharp.	9
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	The definitive, open-ended RPG epic. Sort of like *GTA3*, but with magic and Elves and all that *D&D* flava.	9
Motocross Madness 2	Microsoft	It's mud-splattering, off-road supercross fun with this free-wheeling dirtbike simulator from the makers of *ATV Offroad Fury*.	9
Myth III: The Wolf Age	G.O.D.	Bungie's renowned magical real-time strategy title goes 3D and maintains its fantastic multiplayer reputation.	8
NASCAR Racing 2003	Vivendi Universal	It's the final installment of the series, and it's also the best. There's not much new, but everything's been tweaked to near-perfection.	9
NASCAR Racing 4	Vivendi Universal	Superior simulation of the nail-biting sport of stock racing, with amazingly realistic physics matched by a sublime 3D engine.	9
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	If you're a *D&D* nerd, then you already know, but buy this one especially for the multiplayer and user-made mods.	9
No One Lives Forever	Vivendi Universal	Austin Powers ain't got nothing on Cate Archer, the hottest digital chick with a gun since that old hag Lara Croft.	9
No One Lives Forever 2	Vivendi Universal	As funny and stylish as the original '60s spy spoof (if that's even possible) and more fun to play, too.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis	Codemasters	The first in the highly original series of combat sims, this soldier/flight/tank sim went on to win *CGW*'s 2001 Game of the Year award.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Red Hammer	Codemasters	Letting you play as the bad guys is the sure way into our hearts. Especially when they're nasty Rooskies.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Resistance	Codemasters	Features and content worthy of a brand-new game, this is a benchmark expansion for a classic overlooked game.	8
Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	The command interface and character A.I. have been revamped, but it runs slowly on anything but a high-end rig.	8
Sacrifice	Interplay	Action/strategy hybrid defies the conventions of all the genres it touches, while making for a fantastically original multiplayer experience.	8
Serious Sam	G.O.D.	Brainless running and gunning is an underappreciated way to waste a couple hours with a great-looking game.	8
Sid Meier's Sim Golf	EA Games	*Sim Golf* will have you laying out golf courses and building resorts like a virtual Robert Trent Jones.	8
The Sims	EA Games	It's impossible to categorize EA's addictive superblockbuster life simulator, just like it's impossible to stop playing it.	10
The Sims: Hot Date	EA Games	Gamers everywhere, rejoice! Finally, a game where you can actually learn a thing or two about interacting with the opposite sex!	10
The Sims: House Party	EA Games	Get your soiree (not to mention your freak) on with this great addition to *The Sims*' amazing stable of add-on packs.	8
The Sims Online	EA Games	If you were merely a *Sims* addict before, all hope is now lost. All the world's a stage, and your online Sim persona can play any part.	8
The Sims: Unleashed	EA Games	Not just a great addition to EA's behemoth franchise, an essential one. Everyone needs a dog, or maybe a monkey.	9
Unreal II: The Awakening	Infogrames	Somewhat of a letdown in terms of story and gameplay, but good nonetheless. Call us in five years when our gaming rigs can handle it.	8
Warlords Battlecry II	Ubi Soft	RTS and RPG, two great flavors that go great together—especially when stirred together with a big gnarly wizard's staff!	8

[BUY!]

SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF



It's frustrating to play the most boring sport to watch this side of, well, women's golf. But like most of the other *Sim* games, *Sim Golf* manages to make the mundane an entertaining diversion.

[AVOID!]

EVERQUEST



Not that it's necessarily bad, but unless you want put your social life and personal hygiene in grave danger, you should probably stay away from the digital crack that is *EQ*. The time and energy can be spent better elsewhere.

XBOX TOP 50 LIVE-WIRED

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
Apex	Atari	This racer is fantastic to look at and plays well enough to sit snugly between *Project Gotham Racing* and *Gran Turismo* on your shelf.	8
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Vivendi Universal	A beautiful-looking *Dungeons & Dragons*–based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Blinx: The Time Sweeper	Microsoft	This green-eyed feline can control the flow of time, but puzzles designed around that concept are lacking. Great idea, flawed execution.	6
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	The *Legacy of Kain* story picks up where the original *Blood Omen* left off, with you in control of the evil-yet-likeable vampire Kain.	8
Burnout	Acclaim	An arcade racer with an emphasis on spectacular crashes, which—now that we think about it—defeats the purpose of competitive racing.	8
Cel Damage	Microsoft	Crazy cartoon car combat with great use of cel-shading and varied multiplayer options. It can quickly become repetitive, however.	8
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	Everybody's favorite rally racer, Colin McRae, has a brand-new game featuring finely tuned physics and car damage.	8
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller	Sega	It's hard to improve upon the original, but that didn't stop Sega from trying. Twice. The setting is new, but it plays pretty much the same.	8
Dead or Alive 3	Tecmo	It's not the deepest of fighters, but it definitely competes for the best-looking prize. Plus, the girls are back in all their bouncy glory.	8
Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Tecmo	Pro tip: When playing *DOAX*, have your TV remote close by. If Mom bursts in, hit the surf button and flip to the History Channel. She'll be proud.	8
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	It's creepy. It's gory. It's the Tecmo game without the boobs. Another of those games better enjoyed with the lights off.	8
Genma Onimusha	Capcom	An enhanced port of the PS2 game, *Genma Onimusha* adds improved graphics, available 5.1 audio output, and a new type of soul energy.	7
Halo	Microsoft	The definitive reason to own an Xbox. There are plenty of secondary reasons, sure, but no Xbox owner should be without *Halo*.	10
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
James Bond 007: NightFire	EA Games	*GoldenEye* set an impossibly high standard for the Bond license, but *NightFire* does an admirable job of re-creating the feel of the films.	8
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	*Jet Set Radio Future* has substance and an overabundance of style. Sega simplified tagging in favor of a more robust trick system.	8
Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	It's a crowded genre on Xbox, with three different franchises competing for your attention. *Madden* is always a safe bet.	8
Max Payne	Rockstar Games	The "bullet time" effect is the big draw of this action/shooter. Inspired by Hong Kong action flicks, set against a gritty New York City.	8
MechAssault	Microsoft	It's a good single-player game, but it really shines on Xbox Live, where you're pitted against other mech pilots.	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	EA Games	A strong single-player campaign paves the way across the beaches of Normandy and through the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	Includes the original *MGS2: Sons of Liberty*, five brand-new missions featuring Solid Snake, and a slew of challenging VR missions.	8
MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology	THQ	Different from Namco's *MotoGP* games of the almost-exact same name, but just as good. Can be played via system link or online.	9
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	Hate driving left for hours? NASCAR games probably aren't your thing. But if you "get it," *Thunder 2003* should be right up your alley.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega Sports	Yet another compelling reason to sign up for Xbox Live, *NBA2K3* is the best-playing game of hoops on the system.	9
NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	An improvement over previous versions, with a heavier focus on the faster-paced aspects of the game as opposed to a true simulation.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega	We're secretly hoping next year's version features an NCAA Rules Infraction mode. Think of the possibilities....	8
NFL 2K3	Sega	Sega's latest football effort compares nicely to the firmly entrenched *Madden* juggernaut, and even beats it in some areas.	9
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	*NHL Hitz* rhymes with *NFL Blitz*. That's no mere coincidence. Hockey with no rules is just as fun as its lawless football counterpart.	8
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee	Microsoft	Originally destined for PS2, the now-Xbox exclusive *Munch's Oddysee* is a clever action/puzzle game with a great deal of character.	7
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Sega	Aesthetically beautiful and a dream to play. See what Saturn owners were enjoying seven years ago (the original *Panzer Dragoon* is included).	8
Phantom Crash	Phantagram	The Xbox certainly isn't lacking in mech titles. The quirky, unique *Phantom Crash* has upgradable mechs and a story-driven 1P mode.	9
Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	The refinement of the Kudos point system is the biggest difference between *Project Gotham* and its Dreamcast predecessor.	8
RalliSport Challenge	Microsoft	This rally racer is one of the best examples of the Xbox's power. More arcade than simulation, with enough depth to please both camps.	8
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK Mediactive	Cel-shaded graphics effectively capture the look and feel of the classic 1980s cartoon. Especially enjoyable for fans of the series.	8
Rocky	Ubi Soft	The best boxing game you can get for your Xbox. A technical knock-out , considering there's not much competition.	8
Sega GT 2002	Sega	Sega's answer to the *Gran Turismo* phenomenon. Not quite as expansive in terms of tracks and cars, but better with the details.	8
Shenmue II	Microsoft	The second chapter of Yu Suzuki's opus sees our hero Ryo traversing the streets of Hong Kong in search of his father's killer.	7
Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams	Konami	A creepy port of a creepy game with a creepy bonus: a creepy extra episode of the creepy story. Play without lights for extra creepiness.	8
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	As usual, the *Star Wars* universe inspires great aesthetic design to compliment Raven Software's solid sense of game design.	8
Steel Battalion	Capcom	If you want to play this game , you'll have to shell out $200 for the massive controller. For those with the cash, it's well worth it.	8
Test Drive	Atari	Race for pink slips on the underground circuit, and live out your Vin Diesel role-playing fantasy. Or just act normal and race cars.	8
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	An exhaustive open-ended RPG that essentially allows you to make it up as you go along, with hundreds of people to talk to.	8
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the (PS2) original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	8
ToeJam & Earl III	Sega	Toe Jam and Earl haven't seen much action lately, but the funk is strong this time, and it's better to enjoy funk with a partner. Oh yeah.	8
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft	There's not much of a graphical upgrade from the PC version, but the interface and audio are improved. Goes great with Xbox Live.	8
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Comparisons to *Metal Gear Solid* were inevitable. *Splinter Cell* holds its own, and even outdoes Konami's behemoth at times.	9
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	If you have to have *Tony Hawk 3*, improved graphics and framerate and the custom soundtrack option make this the best version to get.	9
Unreal Championship	Atari	Mindless deathmatching with great weapon design and entertaining multiplayer modes, including the sport-like Bombing Run.	8
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	*WSB2K3* is the best-looking baseball game and it has a great Franchise mode, but it's got A.I. issues that still need to be worked out.	8

[BUY!]

NBA 2K3

➔ The NBA playoffs are in full swing—follow the action by playing *NBA2K3* on Xbox Live, which coincidentally is the only way the Denver Nuggets would ever win the NBA Finals.



[AVOID!]

MURAKUMO

➔ *Murakumo* features great-looking mechs. Too bad you'll be spending most of your time crashing them into the downtown skyline because of poor controls and an illegible heads-up display.



XB

GAMECUBE TOP 50 SUPERSONIC

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	The graphics keep getting better each year, but the gameplay isn't keeping pace. Nice presentation, but the batting interface needs work.	9
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	The game that never ends is based largely on routine chores, yard work, and interior decorating. So why is it so much fun to play?	9
Beach Spikers	Sega	Easy to pick up and easy to play, like *Virtua Tennis*. As with most arcade sports games, it's definitely better as a multiplayer affair.	9
Bomberman Generation	Majesco	A surviving member of the Old School, *Bomberman* has earned some tenure in the industry. This time, he sports a cel-shaded look.	8
Burnout	Acclaim	An arcade racer with an emphasis on spectacular crashes, which—now that we think about it—defeats the purpose of competitive racing.	9
Cubivore	Atlus	A simple but compelling game of reproduction and cannibalism. Plus, you can get "hump points." You know you're interested.	7
Dark Summit	THQ	It's snowboarding set against some sort of nonsense about a secret government plot. The important part is that it's snowboarding.	9
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, *XXX* was based on the well-mannered Dave Mirra and actually focused on—get this—biking.	8
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	Nintendo	This game, if you let it, will mess with your head. The insanity effects are clever (the first time) and the scenery is downright creepy.	8
FIFA 2002	Electronic Arts	Though there's always room for improvement, EA's soccer series has been fairly decent. Plus, there's no real alternative yet.	7
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Atari	Godzilla & Co. wrecking cityscapes and each other, with support for up to four players. What's not to like?	9
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games	This Potter kid seems to be pretty popular, so the folks at EA decided to make a *Zelda*-esque adventure based on his magical exploits.	7
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	It looks and feels like the best *Zelda* game ever, but sailing back and forth in the overworld just feels like work.	9
Lost Kingdoms	Activision	GameCube's first RPG, featuring fast-paced battles, a multiplayer mode, and a well-designed card system. Worth checking out.	9
Luigi's Mansion	Nintendo	We all wanted *Mario* at launch, and we got this. Like getting socks for Christmas, it's good and comfortable, but not what we wanted.	7
Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	Those who bought the GameCube version instead of the PS2 edition were treated to roughly the same game. Good for them, though.	9
Mario Party 4	Nintendo	There are few things better in life than three friends, *Mario Party*, and a healthy flow of alcoholic beverages (if you're legal, of course).	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	EA Games	A new story of D-Day and the ensuing action on the French front lines. The GameCube version has a multiplayer mode the others don't.	9
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	As if they dissected *Super Metroid*, added a dimension, and put it back together again with slick graphics. In fact, it's exactly like that.	10
MLB Slugfest 20-04	Midway	What *Blitz* is to football, *Slugfest* is to baseball. If you can't sit through nine innings of the regular game, this one's for you.	9
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Games	It's apparently the fastest growing "sport" in America, and *Thunder 2003* is packed under the hood, including an in-depth Career mode.	9
NBA 2K2	Sega	More of a sim than *NBA Courtside*, but it's the best basketball simulation available. Includes a great game of street ball, too.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega	Added to this year's version is a slick ESPN interface, an upgraded Franchise mode, and a fresh class of rookies.	9
NBA Courtside	Nintendo	No longer under the Nintendo development umbrella, Left Field's final installment of the *Courtside* series is a worthy b-ball game.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	EA Sports	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega	We're secretly hoping next year's version features an NCAA Rules Infraction mode. Think of the possibilities...	9
Pac-Man World 2	Namco	Purists will yell "HERESY!" at the new Pac-Man who can take multiple hits. People who actually enjoy good games will ignore them.	7
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Sega	Unhealthily addictive. The pursuit of rare items helps one ignore the somewhat repetitive battle (and the $9 monthly fee).	9
Pikmin	Nintendo	*Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto got the idea for this quirky strategy game from observing his personal garden. What kind of garden?	8
Resident Evil	Capcom	This remake could almost be described as a new game. But is it really *Resident Evil* without the laughably bad voice acting?	9
Resident Evil 0	Capcom	This one actually *is* a brand-new game, with significant changes such as droppable items and the dirty-sounding partner-swapping.	8
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega	An arcade-style soccer game with off-the-wall characters, arenas, and power-ups. And it's still better than *Virtua Striker*!	8
Skies of Arcadia: Legend	Sega	If you missed it on Dreamcast—and many of you did—you've been given a second chance. It's even got new characters.	8
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	Rockstar Games	An enhanced version of *Smuggler's Run 2*, with new vehicles and maps and an expanded multiplayer mode with support for four players.	8
Sonic Adventure 2: Battle	Sega	Remember when you and your friends held daily Sonic vs. Mario debates? Don't you feel silly now? Or at least a little old?	7
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	Sure, the *Sonic* games were great, but $40 may be too steep an asking price for a collection of old and unenhanced games.	7
Star Fox Adventures	Nintendo	Rare's last Nintendo effort took forever, but *Star Fox Adventures* takes its inspiration from *The Legend of Zelda*—and that ain't bad.	7
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader	LucasArts	At times, *Rogue Leader* synchs closely with scenes from the movies. Impressive when you consider it took only nine months to make.	9
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	All the intense action of the movie, without melodramatic writing and weak acting. As with many GC games, multiplayer is a big draw.	7
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	Maybe not quite as groundbreaking as *Super Mario 64* was, but even when Nintendo "misses," it makes a big splash.	9
Super Monkey Ball	Sega	Monkeys in balls! An exceptional game based on a simple concept; some of the later levels will eat you for lunch.	8
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Even more monkeys in balls running around for your entertainment! The extra game modes add quite a bit to the simple concept.	9
Super Smash Bros. Melee	Nintendo	A Nintendo fanatic's dream, if only for the exhaustive gallery of collectible Nintendorabilia. Plus, you can beat the crap out of Jigglypuff.	9
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	7
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	For those with the DualShock hardwired into their psyche, switching over to the oddly-shaped GameCube controller can prove difficult.	9
Virtua Striker 2002	Sega	Arcade soccer that was all the rage in Japan, despite severely limited control over player and ball movement. Looks nice, though.	6
Wave Race: Blue Storm	Nintendo	Nintendo messed with the controls when they didn't need any messing with, making *Blue Storm* pale in comparison to its predecessor.	6
WWE Wrestlemania X8	THQ	Ratings have cooled and Stone Cold has had some run-ins with John Law, but that's irrelevant, as wrestling games will always sell.	9
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	If you absolutely must have an X-Men fighting game, this is your best bet. Better fighters exist, but they don't feature Wolverine.	7

[BUY!]

BEACH SPIKERS



No gift giving, casino gambling, or gratuitous lounging by the pool—just pure beach volleyball action. The World Tour mode is great: It's like *Virtua Tennis* in the sand. And with volleyballs.

[AVOID!]

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING



Watching grown men in underwear throw each other around the ring is bad enough, but when the grown men are the old farts of pro wrestling and they're in the terrible *Legends of Wrestling*, well, all hope is lost.

PS1 TOP 25 TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	Like *Super Metroid*, with vampires instead of Metroids. And it was on PlayStation. A certifiable classic.	9
Chrono Cross	Square EA	It wasn't quite the *Chrono Trigger* sequel most people expected, but it's a magnificent game in its own right.	10
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	Codemasters	Americans might be slow in recognizing the name, but race fans know the Colin McRae games were and are among the best.	9
Crash Team Racing	Sony	Countless mascot racers that flooded store shelves during the PlayStation era, and *Crash Team Racing* was the only good one. Really.	9
Einhander	Sony	"Einhander" is German for "awesome 2D shooter that should have sold way more than it did." That, or "one-handed." We're not sure.	9
Final Fantasy Anthology	Square EA	We're not exactly sure how two games out of a series of nine constitutes an "anthology," but they're good games nonetheless.	9
Final Fantasy IX	Square EA	The crystals return to the series, along with a four-member party, blue magic, and black mages. Biggs and Wedge, sadly, do not.	10
Final Fantasy VII	Sony	Brought RPGs into the U.S. spotlight and contained the most debated plot twist of an era. We won't spoil it, but no, you can't.	9
Final Fantasy VIII	Square EA	Things were more "real" this time around—as real as chocobos, guardian forces, and time compression could be, anyway.	9
Gran Turismo	Sony	Of course, it seems foolish now, but the replays had some of us doing double-takes to make sure we weren't watching real race footage.	9
Gran Turismo 2	Sony	More tracks, more cars, more races, more cars, more cars, more modes, and more cars. The second lap was even better than the first.	10
Madden NFL 2001	Electronic Arts	Don't call it a comeback, he's been here for years. Play a version of *Madden* in which the Rams could actually win with Kurt Warner.	9
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	Hideo Kojima's cinematic classic continues to impress, and its video was the first to unofficially win E3's Game of Show. Twice.	10
NFL GameDay '97	Sony	Helped to steal the football crown from *Madden* (only to fumble it right back a few years later).	9
NHL '98	Electronic Arts	A decent game of hockey, and one of the series' brighter spots. Played in college dorms throughout the country.	9
Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	An unlikely hero rises up to overthrow big business. It's very clever...and the political overtones are great for that last-minute term paper.	9
Point Blank	Namco	If *Time Crisis* taught us to be killers, then surely *Point Blank* taught us how to shoot up a car before it falls on us from 40 stories up.	9
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	Zombies running amok in Raccoon City; more B-movie voice acting running amok on your speakers. Enough to fill two discs this time!	9
Ridge Racer Type 4	Namco	Plenty of cars, silky-smooth graphics, and of all things, a Story mode. Best played with the Jogcon controller.	9
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Capcom	Another well-executed arcade port and arguably the best version of *Street Fighter* to grace the system.	9
Tekken 3	Namco	An amazing conversion, given the difference between the arcade and PlayStation hardware at the time. Set the standard for bonuses.	10
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Activision	Some say it's the best installment of the series in terms of control, music, and course design. So do we, actually.	10
Twisted Metal 2	Sony	The granddaddy of vehicular combat games. Sweet Tooth is damning evidence that clowns and anything related to clowning is evil.	9
Worms Armageddon	Hasbro Int.	A highly addictive turn-based strategy game and a practical alternative to throwing grenades at the sidewalk after a rain shower.	9
You Don't Know Jack	Sierra	The ultimate judge of useless-yet-impressive knowledge, assuming you still can't find your *Star Wars* edition of *Trivial Pursuit*.	9

GBA TOP 25 THE SUN ALSO AISES

GAME NAME	PUBLISHER	DESCRIPTION	GMR RATING
Advance Wars	Nintendo	Turn-based military strategy that should be a part of everyone's GBA library. Once you get sucked in, it's hard to pull yourself away.	8
Baseball Advance	THQ	There are only four stadiums and no multiplayer, but it's still a great game of baseball.	8
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	Konami	*Castlevania* was meant to be played in two dimensions, and this game shows why. A complex card system governs your special abilities.	9
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	Konami	The second *Castlevania* is one of the best reasons to own a Game Boy Advance. The colors are brighter and the bosses are bigger.	10
F-Zero Maximum Velocity	Nintendo	An enhanced port of the classic SNES racer with improved graphics and four-player support.	8
Golden Sun	Nintendo	A deep combat engine and brilliant graphics make this the best RPG available on GBA.	9
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Picks up right where the first one lets off. The battle system remains basically unchanged, but puzzles are much more rewarding.	8
GT Advance Championship	THQ	A great-looking/playing racer with one major drawback: a tedious password save system. If you can get past that, well, good for you.	9
Kirby: Nightmare in Dream Land	Nintendo	A remake of the NES classic *Kirby's Adventure* with updated graphics and multiplayer support.	9
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	Straying from the original formula, this *Klonoa* is more of a puzzle game than a platformer, with great graphics and sound.	8
Konami Krazy Racers	Konami	A *Mario Kart*-esque mascot racer filled with classic Konami characters like Dracula, Goemon, and *MGS*'s Ninja.	9
Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	Nintendo	Invite three friends and you've got a bona fide *Zelda* party. Drink Red Medicine till you puke and skinny dip in Lake Hylia!	9
Lufia: Ruins of Lore	Atlus	Perennially overshadowed by Square's offerings, the *Lufia* series is just as engaging as *Final Fantasy*. It's also more challenging.	9
Lunar Legend	Ubi Soft	The anime cut-scenes and superb voice acting may be gone, but the great *Lunar* gameplay and story remain intact.	8
Mario Kart: Super Circuit	Nintendo	A balanced blend of *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64* that even includes all the tracks from the former.	9
Mega Man Zero	Capcom	A difficult yet engaging installment of the *X* side story played as Zero, who is equipped with an arm cannon and beam saber.	8
Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	The follow-up to *Super Metroid* is eight years late, but the wait was well worth it. An adventure that ends way too quickly.	9
Phantasy Star Collection	Sega	Straightforward classic RPG action that's been overlooked for far too long. Includes *Phantasy Star 1, 2,* and *3*.	9
Rayman Advance	Ubi Soft	*Rayman* is just as good in 2D as he is in 3D. It looks great and provides a decent challenge.	9
Super Mario Advance	Nintendo	Aside from the odd naming system, you can't really complain about a portable version of *Super Mario Bros. 2*.	8
Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World	Nintendo	There's really not much else that can be said except "portable *Super Mario World*" and "you should buy it."	9
Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom	Sometimes, you just get bored with *Tetris*. *Puzzle Fighter II* is a fantastic port of a fantastic and highly addictive game. Buy it now.	8
Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis	Atlus	An incredibly deep strategy RPG with a branching story line and a rewarding battle system.	9
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	It's amazing how they managed to cram *Tony Hawk* into a cartridge while keeping the essence of the game true to the console version.	8
Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3	Nintendo	Yoshi is the star of this show, one of the greatest 2D platformers ever put to silicon. There are even a couple of new bonus levels.	9



HE'S OLD! HE'S PISSED!

GAME GEEZER

JUMP BACK: GEEZER'S GOT A FEW STRONG WORDS FOR YOU DEVELOPERS

"Hey, Game Geezer, why so glum? You look a little extra grumpy this month."

Well, that's because I am "extra grumpy," fools. Who let you in here, anyway? I told Mrs. Geezer to lock the damn door and keep you cockroaches out.

"Maybe you'd feel better if you talked about it, Mr. Geezer."

Yeah, and maybe I'd feel better if I bashed you over the head with a hammer. But that won't fix the problem. The problem is, I'm stuck with this freakin' game here that everyone was telling me is so great, but has made me so angry I'm about to throw it out the window.

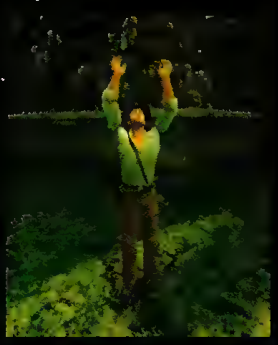
I hate making LucasArts mad, because they'll take away my free pass to *Episode III*, when that eventually comes out and sucks, but I just can't help it. *Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb* is about the most annoying experience I've had since Mrs. Geezer's lower intestines went sour last month and she started passing all that bad gas. And at least that didn't cost me $50.

Oh yeah, the game looks great. Sure. So does George Clooney. Doesn't mean I'm going to hop in bed with that ninny and start getting busy. Anyone can look good. What we need in our games is brains. And whoever made this game—stuffing it full of annoying jumping puzzles and then tripling the problem by not letting us save anywhere—well, I present you with this month's official Game Geezer pink neon dunce cap. Congratulations.

Now, I know I'm old, and my hand-eye coordination isn't what it once was—Mrs. Geezer is still sore from last night's fiasco—but even still, now that we've made it to the 21st century, how about putting a moratorium on jumping puzzles? It's all been downhill since *Mario* anyway, if you ask me. If all you can do is ape what Miyamoto did better than you 20 years ago, why don't you do us all a favor and go scoop ice cream for a living? You can jump around inside the Baskin Robbins while getting me my jamocha almond fudge sundae, if you like jumping so damn much.

And for crying out loud, let us save everywhere. I'm old. I've got things to do. I like playing games, but sometimes I've gotta get up from the game box and go get something to eat, or take a leak. You want to punish me for being human? I'm punished enough just being alive at this point. Yeah, yeah, you're the übergamer. Saves are for sissies. You can make it all the way through games in one go. Hooray for you. But those who suck or who don't have time for long sessions still paid for your game and still want to have fun. Let them play on their terms. You already took their money. If you must, put in harder modes, too. Those who want that kind of challenge will take it.

Bah! Like you're gonna listen. Punk kids. You'll see. You'll see what happens when you get older. In the meantime, go ahead and keep making games that piss people off. There's a really tough jumping puzzle waiting for you in hell.



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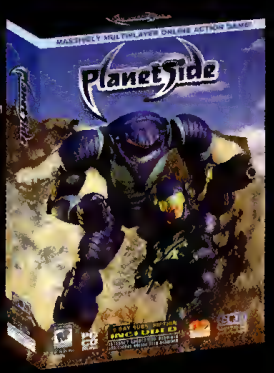




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